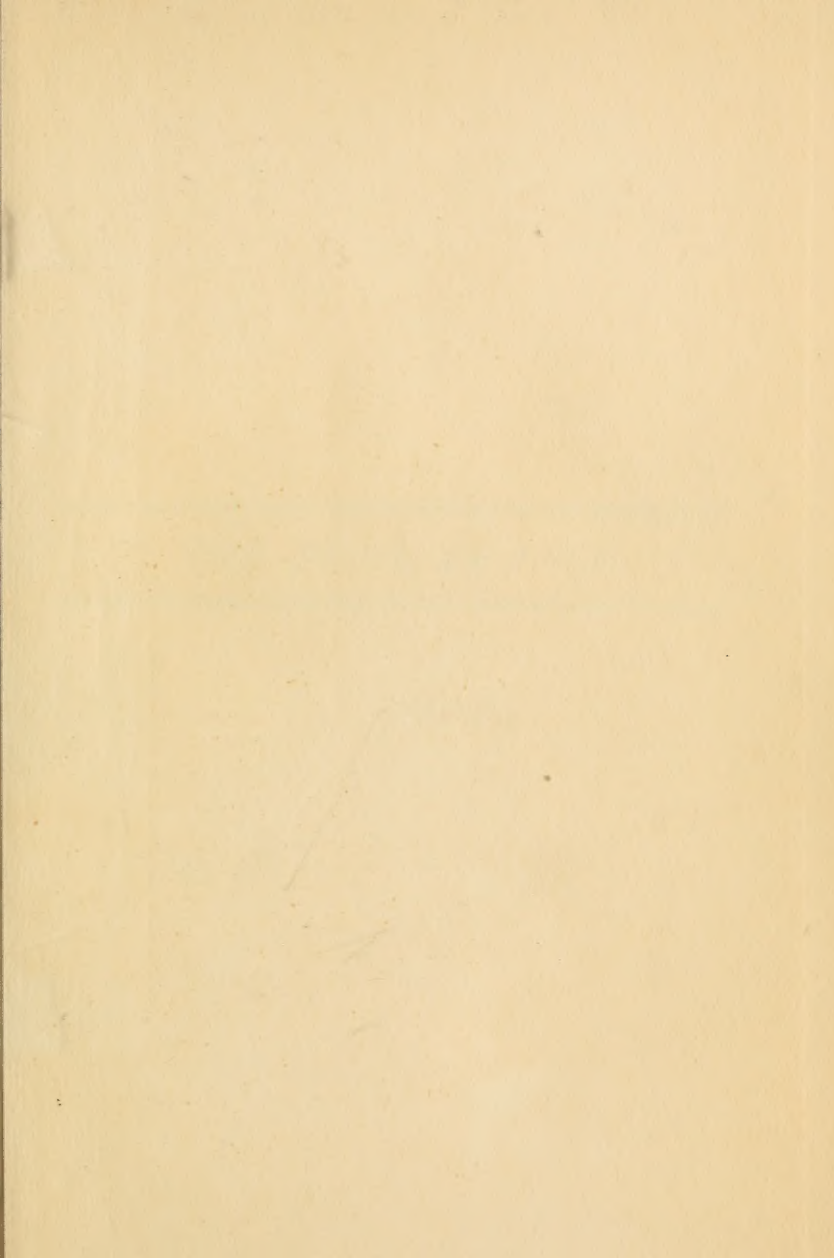


THE REAL FRANCE  
BY LAURENCE JERROLD



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# *THE REAL FRANCE*

*BY LAURENCE JERROLD*

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*THE REAL FRANCE*

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# THE REAL FRANCE

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## *I. The Real France*

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THE new-comer in England sees our solidity; the new-comer among the French is dazzled by their mobility. Afterwards he is surprised to find us sometimes less slow than he thought; but he is amazed to discover a France with great firm feet of clay. This new amazement is an old pleasure to all who have lived long in France. Before it has appeared, we wait for it; soon we watch it growing, and in six months we enjoy it at the full. As long as the fresh observer has not got beyond the boulevards and Montmartre, the Boul. Miche. and Montparnasse, it does not appear and he is dazzled still. The number of those whom the glitter of Paris has drawn and still draws is infinite. Their enthusiasms are pleasing and natural. The air of Paris in spring and summer is as clear as crystal, and outlines of majestic buildings and of majestically composed masses of buildings are defined like clean and bold steel engravings. The life of Paris rippling along the boulevards is easy and bright, and one could be buoyed up by it for ever; who would ever want to live away from the boulevards and to leave them for Anglo-Saxon cares and solemn energy? Frivolous it may be; but must we always be in deadly earnest, and does not the Parisian, who knows how always to live gaily, even so take life as seriously as the serious-minded?—and our new-comer snaps his fingers with an “Eh bien!” and is your true Parisian. He takes

us up to Montmartre and rejoices at the honest and polished immorality of it all. The Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon mind and manners could not do this : they would be uneasily concerned with paying Virtue its public tribute, or in private would be too easily unconcerned with veneering their vices amiably. But this indeed is the real thing, this is the tradition handed on through centuries of pleasant living, which knew no puritanism, from the most civilized court of Europe down through the days that laughed and were pleasurable while the tumbrils passed to the guillotine. He takes us across the water to the Boul. Miche. and rejoices over careless and intelligent Bohemianism. Murger's Grisettes may be dead, and a new " *Vie de Bohème* " have arisen, but the same light wine is pressed out of life, it is the same high vitality, the same bright living, blended with the same artistic dash of pleasantly keen thinking.

Only in Paris life sparkles like that, free from extinguishing cares, responsibilities, conventions, prejudices, and commonplaces : it dazzles for months, then the amazing discovery begins—the finding of a solid Paris, a Paris of the old earth, with roots in deep custom, a Paris of rock-like consistency and iron faithfulness, a simple, straight, ordered, long-headed, and earnest Paris. The Latin Quarter may let the fresh stranger into its original life, the life from which the student came and to which he returns when he has done "studying"; the boulevards may introduce him to its mothers and wives, or he may find out that at Montmartre scarcely one in ten pleasant rakes is a Parisian or even a Frenchman. At all events he makes the discovery somehow. The most picturesque way is over the boulevardier's threshold—the boulevardier who knocks about from the last Parisian café to the Dutch liqueur bar, seems to do his business over his cups on a marble table, to nurse his social connections through head

waiters and the lady behind the desk, and to thrive in a whirling world of pointedly civilized thoughts and primitively uncomfortable things, making a brilliant home of a café corner. Cross some boulevardier's real threshold—but it often takes years to pass them—and the boulevard world disappears. Cross it with the boulevard manner and you will at once be incongruous and startling. This is another world which seems never to have heard of the boulevards : here café intimates of ten years' standing to whom life confessions were made over a milk and Vichy are strangers held at arm's length ; here things may not be very luxurious yet, but thoughts are comfortable, easy, and satisfied, and the brilliant Parisianisms have no point left, the scandals no sting, and the jokes no salt. Let us make the wild supposition that the foreigner after six months has crossed the boulevardier's threshold—it would really take him ten years to do it—and imagine his amazement. He is immeasurable miles from the boulevards now, almost further than if he were at Tooting. He is in a tiny castle, battlemented and guarded against boulevardism. The daily scandals of journalism, the hourly intrigues of politicians, and of the army of political camp-followers swarming in the Chamber lobbies, the squalid or puerile machinations of actors, actresses, critics, and théâtreuses, the frantic jealousies and scrambles and elbowings of the men of letters who are getting on : that was what he called Parisian life. In the tiny castle, Papa, who is a famous journalist out of doors, lifts gently the curtain of the cot where the little crumpled-faced, black-haired baby sleeps, looks with a great tenderness and without a shade of the Englishman's "mauvaise honte" and says quite honestly and purely and without the smallest sense of the ludicrous : "Mon cher, believe me, there is the best page I ever wrote." Parisianism sweeps round that tiny castle in furious gusts, but only

a few filtered breaths of it are ever let in. Moralizing playwrights like M. Brieux are perpetually discovering that the father and the mother and the child are a sacred trinity. The foreigner who was trying to be "Parisian" in boulevard cafés finds across the boulevardier's threshold no more subtlety and complication than that. The mother and the father, when they go out, reel off, till he can hardly follow it, that peculiar Parisian small talk, the characteristic of which is that it touches with a light but audacious finger upon essential things. "Chez eux" it is they who seem to him to be the simple beings, and he it is who feels complicated. It is the Frenchman's flat that is his tiny castle, and will remain the last refuge of simplicity in a complicated world.

The boulevardier and his wife, the student and his mother, Montmartre and home reflect France in their small ways. Every people is a people of contrasts, but this is a people of one constant and pervading contrast. The boulevardier who squanders not deliberate wit but treasures of light humour strolling along the asphalt or leaning his elbows on a marble café table, and goes home to help his wife button up her dress behind and to dandle their one precious boy while she takes a final taste of the simmering "pot-au-feu"; the student who blows penny horns down the Boul. Miche. and breaks plates and steals china match-boxes at the d'Harcourt with ladies as polyandrous as he is polygamous, and who spends Sunday with his long-headed, far-seeing, great-hearted mother who smooths and orders his life for him, to whom he listens as he listens to no mentor of the Sorbonne, and who teaches him not only a woman's and a mother's world, but a man's world and the world; Montmartre going mad in a dozen night cafés, and Paris up and out at dawn to work from homes neat as band-boxes: these are miniature images of France. Every



people plays and works, but none plays as furiously and works as quietly as the French ; the fever of the game of life runs through their character, but beneath it plods everywhere the labour of living. It is no mere accidental contrast between Montmartre on the one hand, its white-haired jesters in pink paper caps, its wrestling girls, its women in baby frocks, its Saturnalia with the occasional flash of a knife, and on the other, Paris homes calm as sleepy villages, and as ignorant as they of any Montmartre ; the intellectual frivolity of the boulevard or the vivacious Bohemianism of students, cheek by jowl with the level-headedness of continual plodders and rock-like respectability, are not two mere pictures side by side ; it is not a plain case of play versus labour, rakes against prigs, nor the common and old misunderstanding between the world which amuses itself and the world which doesn't, often because it can't. On the contrary, there is generally no misunderstanding at all, and the two moods of the French temper understand each other quite well. For it is a question of two moods and even of two permanent compartments of the mind. It can be said that the national French trait is the combination of mobility with solidity—mobility of thought and feeling with solidity of character—and the nice balance between the mobile modes and the solid substance of French life. Such equilibrium is not an equally essential characteristic of any other nation ; we have steadiness and we have imagination, but we rarely possess a compound of the two. Our pillars of Society are as solid as they make 'em, warranted never to yield at the capital or wobble at the base. They are the safest men in Europe, and they chiefly are what the Europe which knows us only collectively admires us for. But they are not men of moods, and one shrinks even from supposing that they ever had fancy. They do not belong to that class which has it, and they

keep strictly clear of any such class whose whereabouts they may happen to hear of. They are the solid structure of the nation and neither forget it nor let you forget it, nor allow any vein of national imaginativeness to creep into their build : the pillars of our Society are homogeneous through and through and all over, and there are no arabesques and chiselled scrolls about them. Yet perhaps more than any other people, we have had poetry and imagination, have dreamt dreams and sung the music of words. To the fervour and freedom of some of our dreamers' dreams and to the music of some of our words, no other people has attained, and the French not more than any other. By the side of our poets the French are prose thinkers ; compared with our pillars of Society the French is a people of poets. We keep prose and poetry neatly apart. Our solid men are solid, but our poets have no feet of clay. Our imagination when it begins flies to amazing, dizzy worlds, and discovers the most splendid, sometimes unearthly countries of the mind. It can be divine and it can also become inhuman ; as for the pillars of our Society, they don't even know it started on its voyage. Nor is imagination only in our poets, and we have dreamt other dreams than in the music of words. Some of them have been not at all musical nor humorous nor very intelligent, but they were truly imaginative dreams all the same. We may proudly say that no people has produced more faddists than ours : they are great dreamers and prove our imaginativeness. Be it predestination, hell fire, the big drum of salvation, anti-vivisection, anti-vaccination, or whatever the cudgels be taken up for or against, the spirit of it all is ideal and what realization there is, ordinarily unearthly. This is real imagination that leaves behind, brushes away humanity : we have it and no one else has it to the same degree, certainly not the French people which never shakes

off the common human bond. Between the pillars of Anglo-Saxon Society and the Anglo-Saxon dreamers, be they poets or reformers or charming old ladies with a fixed idea, whole worlds lie, a difference not of degree but of kind. Between the greatest French dreamers and the "bourgeois" of France there is a kinship, however distant: the dreamer still belongs to the earth, the "bourgeois" may see glimmers of the sky.

The French have dreamt high, but rarely unearthly dreams, and when they have kept close to the earth perhaps they have also looked up. Perhaps one can say of them, in the line of their own poet, that they deserve "*ni cet excès d'honneur ni cette indignité.*" We have at times risen to excessive honours and also been at times unworthy; the French move less far from the middle way. Their solidity keeps them from impossible, curious, or ridiculous dreams, and from some beautiful dreaming as well; but, on the other hand, their mobility preserves them from crystallization. They are too completely and serenely human to harbour cranks, and so human, indeed, that they stop short of some poetry; but they are alive from top to toe—to the toes of their feet of clay—and even the pillars of their Society are human. These have not the impervious stubbornness of ours, but throw out some feelers into the other world, the world of imagination and fancy. The French "bourgeoisie" for all its solidity knows that there are such other worlds, may fear them, but often mixes some admiration with its alarm. By itself, also, it has if not dreams at least inklings, doubts, and questionings. It has not the miraculously impenetrable self-assurance of our "bourgeoisie" brought up to set certain questions of the world—most of those that matter most—into a sealed thought-tight compartment once for all never to be opened. It casts, or has at moments of its life cast, quick,

fearful glances into the casket of Psyche, and by that has lost the power of that perfect complacency, so hard and smooth that no diamond point of a questioning can scratch it. Yet, for all that, the pillars of French Society are solid through and through, and stand on deep foundations. Nor are only the pillars of French Society solid ; or rather, almost every Frenchman and woman is a pillar of Society. Even dreamers as well as realists, those who soar and those who plod, the philosopher and the poet with those whose thinking the daily prose confines, are men and women who hold to a serious and unshakable faith in life by ancient roots put forth by past generations bred in the same faith. They take life as it is for granted once for all, and in judging any new thing, posit first their faith in life as the one firmest basis to reason from. Thus such dreams, curious, ridiculous, generous, pathetic, not tragic, as much of our public, not our political life, is made of, could have no attraction for them. The Salvation Army can never do any harm, and does little good in France. Hyde Park orators there would have no hearers, and old Exeter Hall would have remained empty day after day. There is no "We speak for those who cannot speak for themselves" written up in the 'buses of selfishly and self-centredly human Paris. A French conscientious objector to vaccination does not exist. French total abstainers are a handful, and of the others not one in a hundred ever gets drunk. Cowper-Templerism, the confusion of compromise, scruples, vested rights, in which English primary education is involved, is unthinkable in France, where such things are serenely swept away to make room for a blandly and ruthlessly logical system. The strength of Non-conformity is a force of which France has no conception. French Protestantism is to a certain extent a political power, but the only religious social power in France is the Church of Rome, and



the average Frenchman will either accept a Christian church which for nineteen centuries has been bound up with human history and has bound itself up with unnumbered human compromises, or will have no Christian church at all, and does not understand churches that have started afresh from bare principles and reason. If you want a Christianity you have one ready-made at Rome which has proved its lastingness, if you don't want that you need no Christianity: that is the French logic. The French feeling is that the only human church is that of which the foundation is the Unknowable and the ancient and mighty edifice a structure of contingencies, and that any church started without mystery, on the will to know, and built up by the will to force the relative into line with the absolute, is inhuman: if you want to know leave all churches. Religious dreams great and small which have tortured or amused the English mind, leave the French unwrung, or uninterested. Pascal, in so far as he was inhuman, stands almost alone in French literature, and there are hardly any French mystics. Intellectually restless and always ready for the spring, the French mind is, at the same time, kept to the earth by bonds that almost never snap; the alertest and quickest of minds, it is hardly ever pure mind, and it neither tries nor feigns to break away from the flesh from which it always remembers that it came. It is probably, on an average, a more intelligent mind than any other; it soars less than many others, or if it soars, does not lose sight of the earth. Our imagination has played in fads and triumphed in glorious dreams, but the pillars of our Society have no imagination. The French mind has been too human for faddism, and too human for the greatest poetry; but even the pillars of French Society have intelligence.

The contrast between the boulevards and the boule-

vardier's home, Montmartre and hard-working Paris, student life and the student's family life, is of a piece with French dualism in bigger things. The mood that plays wild games at Montmartre, flutters pleasantly on the boulevards, and larks on the Boul. Miche., is a small aspect of national vivacity, which in its largest is a broadly intelligent outlook upon the world ; and the daily labour mixed up with the games of Montmartre, the simplicity of the homes which lie behind boulevardier frivolity, and the earnest family background to Latin Quarter Bohemianism are all parcels of the great instinctive French faith in life, which in big things brakes the whirling wheel of political changeableness, compensates social instability, and counter-balances philosophic doubt, as in the smaller it steadies feather-brained heads, and constantly leavens the pleasant corruption, which the superficial onlooker sees, with a severe healthiness, which escapes him : to him the France of to-day is a long riddle in consequence, and he ever wonders why, always going to the dogs, she never seems to get there, and from what store she replenishes the vital forces of which he perceives only the spending.

From the heights of Montmartre to the depths of metaphysical speculation, the same saving balances the same spending. Politics and Society, laws and customs, public and private life, the community and the individual, collective relations, and the intercourse of man to man, show the same equipoise. Throughout it all, thought is like quicksilver, but the solid sense of life is immovable. No mind more than the French enjoys thinking for the sake of thinking, and intellectual games for the sake of the play. None certainly has such practice in youth, and such eager early years of intellectual riotousness. The French boy with brains gets drunk with thinking at nineteen or twenty, and remains steeped in a debauchery of the intellect until he is

twenty-five or so. It can be said deliberately that his counterpart in English boys is a child in mental development by his side. The wonder often is that in after life the English boy does what he does—and sometimes also that the French boy has not done more than he has. He begins life certainly with an incomparable understanding and enthusiasm of the mind. English college debates would seem to him—apart from the actual debating manner which he does not possess—child's play in subject and in treatment. Their philosophy he would smile at, though as a speaker he might cut a poor figure in them, and the political spirit constantly cropping up would not interest him much. The mere game of party politics is too easy for him, and the political science itself too immediately practical. He jumps at once to the essential problems and discovers the world in itself at one leap. No fact of intellectual development is noteworthier or more stimulating than he. He feels a young god, just born into a marvellous world of ideas, he has the young god's fervour and divine perception, he fires the listener with his fervour and satisfies him with his intelligence. I remember conclaves of young Frenchmen in their early twenties, to which one can look back with experience as with regret, but not with indulgence. There was nothing to forgive them for except their enthusiasms; their intelligence was not callow. They were fresh to the world, but not greenhorns. They were hasty and violent, inexperienced and intolerant, but what they were least tolerant of was a dull understanding. Their enthusiasms were always hyperbolic and sometimes absurd, but never unintelligent; they damned as they extolled with impertinent and funny cocksureness, but never stupidly. Their sensibility was furiously biassed, but their understanding was clear and acute. They campaigned for ideas, started monasteries for meditation,

published magazines either to regenerate or to spurn the world, wrote volumes of new philosophy, brought out unplayable philosophic plays among themselves, plunged furiously now and then into current events, with a demonstration always on the side of Don Quixote, they read feverishly everything most remote, they accumulated great quantities of peculiar, out-of-the-way, and practically useless erudition, they spent all their pocket-money on their ideas, they built for themselves a little fever-heated, eager, truth-hunting world of their own, and lived in it with passionate sincerity.

All thinking young France passes through this phase of intellectual wild oats. The ferment in the brain of the rising generation is livelier in France than in any other country. To the heated and romantic picture, drawn with extraordinary intensity by Alfred de Musset in the beginning of the *Confessions d'un Enfant du Siècle*, a counterpart could be found in many ages of history and certainly in the present, with essential differences, but with one essential likeness. To-day the picture would have nothing of Musset's lyric passion or of his gush, little of his sentiment and nothing of his sentimentality, neither the simplicity of his Byronic despair, nor the naïveté of his revolts and of the world-grief over which he weeps, nor the child-like candour of his yearnings, but it would show the same eager young spirit, trying, as it sets out on its journey, to read the world's very best riddles. It is often repeated by the French themselves, that their boys to-day set out at once to "arrive" and are at twenty worldly and at twenty-five either young conquerors or young victims, already winning or already beaten in the Parisian battle with the weapons of a society which bows only to success. But "arriviste" French youth is not thinking French youth—and in that lies sometimes something of a tragedy.



It is something of a tragedy also that so much of thinking French youth almost disdains to arrive. Unselfish intellect and disinterested enthusiasm imagines that to be practical is to be weak, and in the days of the "jeunes revues" it would have been almost a disgrace to have been paid for one's contributions. The same spirit grows up, and many of France's thinkers who have had no thought of worldly success, despise, not from jealousy, but on principle, others who have succeeded, who perhaps may have thought just as originally, but who were damned with the fatal instinct of getting on in spite of their originality. In youth, contempt is naturally stronger, and the young man whose father made money enough to allow him to think originally within his means, blushes for his money-making papa, spurns money-making for himself, and will hardly shake hands with the youth who wants to get on. Yet the "arriviste," the ferocious, flippantly vulgar, vilely "cute" arriviste, is in his way also an example of French vitality.

The young arriviste of to-day—and he never was as prevalent as to-day—is for the matter of that a wonderful person. One meets him particularly in the political world. Two, four, or half a dozen years ago he clung by his eyebrows to the fringe of journalism, went to those Press banquets for which the reporting journalist has no time, and others have no inclination, and borrowed five francs of anybody who would lend it him, on the strength of no introduction at all in the smoking-room. He disappeared for an interval, and one thought he had gone under; he suddenly reappeared private secretary to a Cabinet Minister, how or why appointed, no one knew, perhaps the Cabinet Minister least of all. The young arriviste has no talents whatever, and no money, and no more family influence than a thousand others, and had not the ghost of a social position. He has impudence and incredible

push, he was always in the doorway when the future Cabinet Minister went in and out of political ante-rooms, he always said the vigorous platitudes which impose upon public men, he was there, of course, when the Cabinet Minister was looking for a "chef de Cabinet," he was there assertive and elbowing everybody else out, and he was appointed. Now he represents the Minister and represents the Government of the French Republic at all the ceremonies which the Minister can contrive to shirk. He pins medals on the coats of faithful servants who have been meek and hard-working for fifty years, he bestows, "in the name of the Government of the Republic," green ribbons of the "agricultural merit" on hard-handed peasants who have tilled the earth and created the riches of France for half a century, and in supreme moments of triumph dubs hard-headed, canny, and solid country mayors Knights of the Legion of Honour. He is less than nothing himself, he has neither toiled nor spun nor thought; and he is arrayed in honours; he is incompetent and uncultured beyond conception, but he has the will to "arrive," and he is "arriving." The only gift which he must have is that of the gab; he talks to everyone and on everything with the same glib ignorance and empty speciousness. He was plucked in every exam at school and college, he understands "not the first word" of any subject; but he talks on social reform and the progress of mankind, on financial laws and agricultural depression, on Morocco and Macedonia, with the same cheerful flow of words that mean nothing to those who think, but overwhelm the simple-minded. He is altogether a marvellous person. One sits and listens to him with amazement. The men of France who have studied and who know sit also astounded, while he leaps over their heads, on his way to a public post in which he will lord it over them. One must admire his impudence, but he surely

is a danger to his country. The young French arriviste is the most alarming French phenomenon of to-day.

Probably only the United States can boast his equal in self-assurance ; but American push has not the finish and polish of his audacity. The former flounders at once the moment it gets away from mere money-making. The arriviste swims confidently in all waters. He does not, as a rule, combine American business capacity with his American instinct of getting on, but there is incomparably more variety, flexibility, and intelligence in his, than in any American or English impudence. He adapts the method of his pushfulness to half a dozen different classes of men and walks of life at will with equal ease ; his audacity is as much at home in literature, and science and art, where " Americanism " feels itself nonplussed, as in business and politics, and that is his superiority. If the world of the stage will help him to get on, he knows how to use it ; he talks to the actresses as they love to be talked to, critics have willy-nilly to listen to him criticizing, and playwrights find themselves learning from him how to write plays : in three months he becomes a first-night celebrity. If the world of letters can serve him, he is soon in it by sheer jostling ; none knows what he is doing in it, but none has the moral courage to turn him out. Half a dozen literary catchwords caught up, as many damningly authoritative judgments learnt by rote, are all his equipment, but they are enough for him, and once in a literary set he sticks there, listened to by men who wonder when he is gone why they listened to him, but will listen again when he returns, and classed after a month or two, by lazy public opinion, as a somebody in the world of letters. In art, if art can be of use to him, he merely steals a dozen opinions from the proper quarter and is acknowledged a judge, or he may even be industrious enough to envelope a few truisms in a



cloud of verbosity, publish the stuff as a magazine article and impose himself as the inventor of a new *Æsthetic*. Science may also serve him ; if so, he is careful to confine himself to "applied" science, plans an aeroplane or a motor brake, on paper, and thenceforward treats the greatest thinkers of French science as his equals, patronizing them slightly as theoreticians. No men in France, as elsewhere, are as modest as the greatest ; but even so the onlooker is astounded by the ease with which the arriviste "arrives" among them, and gains a hearing and standing among artists in words, in colour, or in marble, who humbly confess that their Art is greater than they and that the work of their lives has never come up to their desires, and among men of science who have learnt for a lifetime and meekly acknowledge that they know little. *He* knows and he is satisfied, and he is taken, if not at his word, at least with amazing seriousness. He is totally a sham, but he never seems to be found out, or not until too late. By that time he has got on and has kicked away whatever ladders he climbed ; no matter now how he rose, whether through local politics or "world politics"—in which he is as competent as in anything else—or by the indirect ways of the boulevards, literary Bohemia, Academic salons, influential studios, or the strange human medium which is agglomerated round motor-cars and flying machines and which will serve as well as any other for pushing your true arriviste on.

The arriviste's gift is the debased form of French intellectual mobility. At the opposite pole is the mature thought of France, but that is to be opposed also to what itself was in the green. In no country has frivolous audacity such chances of success, but in none will it meet with deeper contempt from serious minds. In no country do the brains of the nation sow their intellectual wild oats so wildly, but

in none do they settle down in riper years to such solidity of thinking. The very "jeunes" who played the most feverish games of the mind, and held no principle too sacred and no idea too fundamental to juggle skilfully and confidently with, are the same that a decade later lend all their wit to the support of the solidest philosophies. In metaphysics, the average French philosophic mind comes round in the long run after all its skirmishes and excursions to either dualism or idealism. In letters, the revolutionary spirit nine times out of ten finds an eventual harbour in classicism. In Sociology, the mellowed Anarchist ends by elaborating theories of a strengthened social order. The University of Paris still expounds two or three official philosophies: form and substance, matter and mind, the phenomenon and the thing in itself are yet, in the doctrines of the majority of Sorbonne teachers, the one essential antithesis of the universe; the young man nevertheless will be allowed the bold venture of proclaiming for pure Idealism, but modern Monism is a heresy and even Leibnitz continues to be held rather "subversive"; Materialism and Positivism, in the country of Condorcet and Comte and the country which, many an ingenuous Christian observer will tell you, has driven God from the popular mind, the official philosophies of the Sorbonne abhor; it is not so long since they deliberately ignored Herbert Spencer, and it will still be a bad mark against a candidate for the Ph.D. that in his thesis he should, having posited the Unknowable, thereupon leave it alone. The French Academy is the one bulwark of literary conservatism in the world, and in no other country is there any preserving force in the least like it. The "jeunes," and some of their elders, laugh at the Academy, but it holds on, the same steady brake on the wheel as ever. A quarter of a century of contemporary French poetry rushes with

eager vitality through a dozen revolutions, Decadentism, Symbolism, Naturism, and successive meltings and recasts of the form of its verse; the Academy hardly even looks on and to this day ignores the so-called "vers libre." Thus—but it is a weakened comparison—a British Academy to-day might enforce exclusively the standard of Pope's or Addison's versification. The cast steel mould of French Alexandrine verse is the same to-day as in the seventeenth century except for one minute change. A "license" now allowed sparingly is the division of the line into three equal parts by two cæsuras instead of in half by one. But the syllables, pronounced or not as twelve, remain inexorably twelve to the eye; a mute E before a consonant is in theory a full syllable as ever, though spoken in a quarter of the time; pairs of masculine and feminine rhymes must invariably alternate; and a line with an hiatus between two words, the first ending and the second beginning with a vowel (an H before the latter may make all the difference), is dismissed as "not poetry" by the French Academy. To this day "tu aimes" must not be written in an Alexandrine line; "tu hais" may because the "h" is said to be aspirated, i.e. the hiatus is required, the French aspirate being merely an hiatus. But "tu hérites" again is forbidden. In "vers libre," either freed from some of such conventions, or built upon experiments new to French versification, at least since the Renaissance, in quantity, assonance and tonic accent, much intelligent, sensitive, delicate, subtile, refined, and some great French poetry has been written in the past twenty-five years: the French Academy dismisses it all as not poetry at all. The amount of intelligence spent upon every "ism" of the "jeunes," from Decadentism and Symbolism to Naturism, sometimes wasted but more often invested profitably, is enormous and larger than any contemporary movement

in other countries can show : to the French Academy it all is as if it were not. Never was such intellectual mobility allied to such intellectual stability in a nation. In Sociology, the most important French contributions to the science are conservative. To justify the ways of Society to man is the aim of the schools, much more than to justify man to Society. Few of their thinkers and writers are individualists ; the majority bring each their prop to stay the social order. They are not even much concerned with regenerating Society and building a new order. They work on traditional ground, it is to the old order they bring their bricks, and the chief theoreticians of the various and contradictory forms of Socialism, Collectivism, Anarchist Communism and so on, are not to-day to be sought among them. French Sociology devotes an immense amount of industry on the contrary to Social preservation. The social doctrines of French official bodies of learning are more conservative than in any other country : a suspicion of Socialism still shocks the Academy of moral and political science exceedingly.

The deep instinct which steadies the mind of France, as the "stabilizer" steadies her aeroplanes, rarely fails to seize and to sober her acutest brains at some stage of their cultivation, whatever field of activity they may think in. Few countries, for example, possess so curious a growth as Anarchism turned Nationalism ; it is almost common to-day on French soil. M. Maurice Barrès is not alone in his faith. In that creed, an old æsthetic individualism which was ground down to the point of a refined literary cruelty, has become through extraordinary transformations an ingenuously conservative social doctrine, confusedly aiming at reaction, and harking for its purpose back to generalities which are opposed alike to the individualist and to the socialist tendencies usually observed in modern com-



munities. The passage in a decade or so from a "cultivation of the ego" which became a blatant though ingeniously upheld affectation, to a vaguely primitive political creed, which clings to only one solid article of faith, parochial patriotism of the soil and of "little fatherlands," and on the strength of that callow principle alone endeavours to build up a "Nationalism"—self-contradictory for it should obviously consist on the contrary of a number of perhaps conflicting small nationalisms—in opposition simultaneously to French Radicalism and to French Socialism, has been the strange Sociological evolution of many "jeunes": a clique of fastidious literary Anarchists has in ten years become a party which spends an immense amount of brains and energy upon wreathing with every flower of rhetoric, every literary ornament and every intellectual art, a political doctrine, which, being stripped, is reduced to a few catch-words fit for yokels. No young men elsewhere after such furious thinking ever came to such raw conclusions. The conversion of exquisite Anarchists to a "Nationalism" for simple souls, has been the most prominent phenomenon in the social theorising of young thinking France. In literature the old classicism will out, the probably indelible stamp of the seventeenth century reappears constantly from under the impressions left by a score of passionate and thoughtful revolutions. The most wildly free young poet has never really lost respect for his cast-off fetters, and an uneasy consciousness of the immorality of an hiatus or a thirteen syllable line. In the midst of furious symbolism and frantic decadence, behind the rapture always lurked the dim faith that in the final analysis taste and measure are the only real gods of art, that the highest beauty is the clearest, that mystery cannot be highly beautiful, and that real sublimity is the perfection of precision and force, preferably antithetical,

divested of any of the stuff that dreams are made of, the sublimity to which those delicious foot-notes of Voltaire point, in his edition of Corneille, as in *Cinna*: "Aemilie: Tu m'oses aimer et tu n'oses mourir. Note: 'Tu m'oses aimer et tu n'oses mourir' is sublime (Voltaire)." "Take eloquence and wring its neck," said Verlaine, in that wonderful wayward song of his which he called with sweet irony "Art poétique," but even the worst French enemies of Victor Hugo's eloquence have not yet accepted Verlaine as perhaps their truest poet. The admirably prosaic French mind can rarely be brought to believe that poetic beauty lies less in saying things than in not saying them. No modern generation has plunged more fervently into mysteries and dreams than the French, wild dreams and fantastic mysteries, yet it emerges from its transports still clear-eyed and cool-brained. That is an admirable, almost a fatally admirable balance of mind. The "jeunes" who "discovered" Blake and reeled with delight, returned after all to Racine. He is naturally nearer to them as he is nearer to us all. But in no other country after such mystic voyages could there be such a home-coming back to resolutely human things. Our few young mystics have never come back at all; the most eagerly adventurous French literary mind in perilous seas and fairy lands forlorn, always hears the bell to call him back, not to his sole self, but to mankind. He really had never forgotten that he had left mankind. All the French philosophizing of passionate young pilgrims discovering the world also has its feet of clay. Nowhere has the mystic spirit from Plotinus to Novalis been explored so eagerly. But it has almost always been the same return in the end to the haven whence the eye of healthy reason and sane flesh looks out and around steadily upon human affairs. From all the wild excursions of impetuous travelers, who seemed to be zealots and bigots into every deeply



or curiously inhuman faith, ancient and modern mysticisms on the one hand, amusing perversities like Satanism on the other, no sects have remained, but only a plentiful experience. Anywhere else so much furious adventure of souls would have left a dozen schools sprouting up on the way. In France almost every soul comes home enriched by experience, not essentially converted or perverted. Floods of metaphysics pass over the French philosophic mind like water off a duck's back, the only difference is the duck has learned the better to swim.

This intellectual dualism, this capacity for riding the storm without losing the bearings by which the still harbour will be reached again, is repeated in political life. A dozen contemporary events have proved it. What other country could have lived through and lived down the Dreyfus case? Where else could the Church have been dis-established, torn up from ancient roots in a year by the State and no hurt done to either State or Church? What other nation to-day has funk'd so thoroughly or bucked itself up so well? What other has been as gushing and as sensible? In the history of the Dreyfus case the most remarkable page was the epilogue, before which exhausted readers generally shut the book, and the events that had most meaning in them were those that happened after it was all over and the world had wearied of it. If the victim, his persecutors, and his champions alike rightly astonished the world, the nation at the close of it all should have astonished it still more. Such a crisis has rarely, such a recovery has never been known. If one look back ten years one rubs one's eyes and wonders whether it be the same people that was torn then with as furious passions as ever beset a community, the same that purged its passions by sheer will, that righted wrongs and punished wrong-doers as far as could be, and that at last emerged serenely, not weaker, but stronger, out

of the hurly-burly. History will remember not so much that France had a Dreyfus case as that she settled it. Dis-establishment, as the French State carried it through, was an undertaking which pre-supposed in the people the same combination of rashness and steadiness, the same venturesomeness and stability. It seemed a mad enterprise to uproot in one year a national Church older than the nation, and to draw up a brand-new Constitution for the Church in France, her "eldest daughter"; to take up the gauntlet which Rome, by rejecting that constitution, threw down, seemed an even more dangerous folly, inviting civil war. The amazing venture succeeded. French levelheadedness suddenly came to the rescue of French audacity; a resourceful commonsense stepped quietly in to set the pace where only impetuous Dogmatism seemed to be rushing headlong. In a week or two, after a year of dry imperious theorising, a *modus vivendi* was found upon which Church and State could comfortably live, and do. Out of the deadlock sprang, almost naturally, a few neat measures of compromise and unravelled the inextricable. Civil war melted in a day or two into cheerful peace. The State came out strengthened by national approval; the Church came out strengthened by self-reliance. Now, re-establishment is unthinkable, and the Church has more power than ever. So incautious a political revolution never ended in so solid a settlement. In foreign relations, French policy shows a deceptive capriciousness, preserving in truth a steady head for business. France appeared to make herself ridiculous over the alliance with Russia in the honeymoon days; when the partner fell on hard times, she neither gushed any more nor nagged, but held her own quietly; she now reaps the double reward due to constancy in need and to the superior person who stood by the partner in his weakness. In the history of the *Entente Cordiale*, it was we whose

vivacious enthusiasms were Gallic, and the mobile French people, before accepting them, looked them carefully over, sneered at them for a time, priced them, weighed them, and finally did strike the bargain. It was a perfectly business-like bargain on the side of France, and having struck it she stuck to it ; but there never was a better proof of her cool head for business. She lost it once very badly in her relations with Germany. When Delcassé was kicked out, it was the France of spasmodic impulses and fits of nerves, the traditional France in the opinion of other countries, that did it, and her fit of nerves was a fit of cowardice. No other great nation has had such a funk in modern times. Three years later she answered Germany as no other Power has dared answer the present German Empire since it was founded. In that time she had, without a word, re-tempered her spirit ; it was the other France that did that, the France of the deep strata below the surface.

The social facts of France, either lasting or passing, all fall into an antithesis. They show the national character almost in skeleton form, and the extreme contrast between surface variations and underlying permanency. The history of her Socialism in particular, and of her labour movements in general has been one continuous antithesis. All recent labour agitations might be examples invented ad hoc to illustrate the dualism of France. Her labour movements and ours have followed almost opposite roads. Ours came or are coming from practice to theory ; hers began with the theory. In England Trade Unionism is an old institution ; in France Parliamentary Socialism is the parent. In one country the Unions are the Conservative wing of the Labour Party ; in the other they are the Revolutionary vanguard. In the one, Unions send members to Parliament ; in the other Socialist deputies try to promote Unions. In the one, the Union men who have paid their weekly pence and have

for years put together their business and their brains, as well as their cash, are the power ; in the other the Socialist party in Parliament has long had the power, and the leaders counted long before those whom they led were of any account, often before they had any number of men worth speaking of to lead. In a sense, thus, the divine average has pushed Socialism in England, and intellectual aristocracy has advanced it in France. Nothing has been more characteristically French than the social development of France. The leaders really lead, the followers really follow ; our leaders have generally been led by their followers. The leaders are the motive force, the followers the brake on the wheel ; the leaders rush and the followers sometimes find themselves whither they had not bargained to be led. French Socialism is almost an ancient institution ; its Parliamentary Party is the oldest, and if not the most numerous, certainly the most powerful socialist party in any European Parliament. French Socialists are newer to socialism and a great deal less strong in it than the men they elect. The leaders are variations of type, the followers are the permanent elements of national character. It is true that of late the Parliamentary Socialist Party has been somewhat left behind by some other Socialist nuclei, but that development has merely reproduced the same distinction in different ways. The Parliamentary leaders felt so sure of their lead that they dropped their followers and ignored Trade Unions altogether. Another vanguard sprang up, the " C.G.T." and the old leaders found themselves being led. But the distinction remains the same, is even sharpened. The " C.G.T." is a yet wider variation of type than the Parliamentary Socialist Party, and its dim followers are by comparison yet more completely on the permanent level. In all French labour movements the imagination at the head has run on, the body, in spite



of spasmodic forward bursts, has in the main jogged its level way. All recent labour agitations have proved really only one thing, the stability of the deep waters under a mobile surface. A few impressions remain of these May days and general strikes and Wine Wars : the middle-aged rosetted gentleman drinking his bock slowly on a café " terrace " behind half a dozen policemen ready to keep off Anarchists ; furious scribbling from politicians who have lost all sense of the meaning and strength of words, and conversations of liberal-minded Conservatives saying honestly, " There was no doubt a time when the individual had rights, in the present situation we cannot afford to let him have any, we must all sacrifice ourselves to save France toppling on the brink of annihilation " ; workingman papa, his only son by the hand, placidly reading wall posters which called for France to rise and stab the bloodiest Government of modern times ; postmen and clerks on strike to obtain a Government-guaranteed " status of functionaries " which should raise the civil servant and employee yet a little higher and settle him yet a little more firmly in the great fabric of French society ; wine growers who rebelled because their wines would not sell, small freehold landlords whose love for their plots and vines was an almost primeval patriotism. The revolutionist whose world is his vineyard, the " functionary " who rebels that his " function " may be more strongly assured in the State, the " Socialist Radical " deputy, who is returned by wealthy Conservative peasants, because Social Radicalism is the governing label, the " Unified Socialist " member, returned to Parliament by the cautiously individualist mechanic who has never made up his mind to pay his subscription to a Trade Union, even if he joined one, because he fights instinctively shy of the subversive co-operation of Labour against Capital, the solidest " bourgeoisie " in the world trembling in

fear of fancied cataclysms, and the most strongly-knit society known in history bracing itself together to ward off an imaginary peril of imminent dissolution, are all, like the Anarchist shoemaker who refused to allow himself to be arrested until he had well and truly finished the pair of shoes he had in hand for a fastidious customer, among the contradictions of the pleasant land of France which make it pleasanter.



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## II. *Realism in Politics*

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I—M. CLEMENCEAU AND M. BRIAND

**M.** CLEMENCEAU said of M. Jaurès that you can always tell his speeches because every verb is in the future tense. I can imagine M. Briand reflecting with some sardonic satisfaction that the tense of M. Clemenceau's political verbs is now the past. If M. Clemenceau was a great realist in power, he found a greater to succeed him. I remember, in a conversation on English constitutional politics, M. Briand being reminded that we are an essentially illogical people and that political logic is peculiarly French. "Ah, la logique!" his soft eyes shone and his mouth went up on one side in a smile, "'la logique' in politics, one believes in it, then one comes back from it." He had at that time been Prime Minister not much over six months. Eight years before he had been an Anarchist. His is the pattern of those French minds that grasp realities. They do not always, perhaps they seldom, go in for politics. The logician in politics is at least equally French, and the doctrinaire has cut off heads to satisfy his passion for logic. But when a French politician is a realist, he cannot be beaten for realism.

M. Clemenceau had a political doctrine and principles of politics; he never made any attempt to act up to the former or to carry out the latter, but at all events he had them. M. Briand enjoyed the strong advantage over him that he had them not. He is the pure realist. When M. Clemenceau was already an old man, an old dogmatic

fearless liberal who had not yet learned the terrors of power, M. Briand was an Anarchist and anti-militarist. He had not even stopped to take in socialism pure on the way, but had leapt from studentship to Anarchist-Communism, which is at once the only pleasant and the only logical scheme of a future society and which requires but one postulate that men become worthy of it. When M. Clemenceau took office for the first time, M. Briand had already begun "realizing" himself, had already travelled all the way from Anarchist-Communism to the ante-room of the Cabinet. Mr. Lloyd-George and Mr. John Burns have, intellectually at least, covered each a quarter of a mile at a snail's pace by comparison. M. Clemenceau has had one of the careers in Europe which have the most picturesque outline; there is no curiosity of outline in that of M. Briand, except the shooting trajectory of a sky rocket still in the sky, but the picturesqueness has been inward, the tempest has been in the mind. His suave manner on his rough face shows no sign of it, but the storm must have been there, for one cannot become such a realist without some inner struggle.

"Go to battle with voting papers, if you think fit, I will not object. Go to battle with pikes, swords, pistols, rifles: far from blaming you, I will hold it my duty, if you do so, to take my place in your ranks. One may advocate a strike of the army, one may even try to bring it about. And then, if the order were still given to fire, if an obstinate officer persisted in trying to curb the troopers' will. . . . Well, no doubt the rifles might go off, but it might not be in the direction ordered," was what Aristide Briand told the General Congress of French Socialist organizations in December, 1899. From that speech, from the petty lawyer's defence of an anti-militarist, from the rising Anarchist-Communist leader's plans for a general strike,

in seven years or so (he was first returned to Parliament in 1902) to Prime Minister of France (in July, 1909), whose words tamed all parties, from the wild Left to the rabid Right, and whose actions doggedly aimed at only one thing, preserving the steady level of French life, when he presided over the elections which have been the most matter of fact held under the Third Republic, is a journey which no mind can accomplish without some tempests in itself on the way and some amazement when it looks back.

Not wholly dishonest, still less entirely sincere, I imagine, was, like many other men and statesmen in particular, the Prime Minister under whom France elected her present Chamber. He was not a complete cynic when he confided engagingly that he had "adapted himself"; he can never have persuaded even himself that his "adaptation" was intellectually or even morally honest. He was not the perfect hedonist, though he could spend his four thousand a year seeing life behind the scenes as well as you or I. He was still less the callow freshman convinced that his services were worth every penny of his salary. He neither forgot a fillip of scepticism in his cup of triumph, nor failed to enjoy his drink, nor pretended that it was an unwholesome drink or that he did not think it was right that he should quaff it. Another's "adaptation" might have been the cool quackery of ambition, the solemn conversion of an honest wiseacre, or a mixture of the both called the fruits of experience. His was none of these things, at least none of them entirely. He said to himself neither "Premiership is worth a Mass," nor, "I am obviously the Heaven sent saviour of my country," nor "Ah, the Idealism of my youth! One lives and learns." To begin with, it does not appear that he had lived and learned much, nor that he pretended to have stopped living and learning; in the second place, when he has spoken most like a statesman he

has always preserved precisely that snap of scepticism which so rarely freshens the flat speeches of public men ; and in the third he has never been hypocrite enough to be charged with mere self-seeking.

Had he advertised political principles on taking supreme office, we might have called him cleverly grasping or obtusely sincere, and probably we could have called him both rightly. But he came to power honestly unprincipled : that was, and may continue to be, the beauty of M. Briand. Others scheme for the enjoyment of power in the name of a great cause, enjoy power for the sake of the cause ; M. Clemenceau held to a political doctrine while squeezing all the satisfaction he could out of power, and smacked his lips over the sweets of office while professing his faith. M. Briand never pretended not to enjoy power, but never patted himself with the conviction that he was enjoying it in defence of a creed. At the same time he did not enjoy cynically, or even as violently as many men of the highest political principles. He took the fun and the work, the profits and the self-spending, as all in the day's chance. A more honestly unprincipled statesman no country has ever known. The most characteristic thing about him is that while no one can call him blind, even those who have watched his career will not say he is a cynic : that so quick and thorough a turn-coat should have been acknowledged to be neither complacently unconscious nor knavishly self-seeking was M. Briand's triumph.

His adaptation was neither hypocrisy nor self-delusion nor honest conversion. He did not pretend to others or to himself, and he did not believe, that he had changed convictions. For aught I know, he may be an Anarchist-Communist still, probably is. In " adapting " himself, he merely shifted his focus : he found he had to do it, looking at things under another angle. He suddenly came close to



realities, his point of view changed, and he adapted himself to it. He did not either knavishly or ingenuously change his philosophy to suit his new prosperity ; all he did was that having been suddenly transported himself into a profitable and solid reality from a dream world, ineffectual and impecunious, he brought into his new world of real politics a philosophy of bland realism, which, taught him by his own sudden removal, seemed as strangely fresh to that world, as that old world seemed fresh to him.

He was a rare realist in French public life because he simply and easily carried into French politics the realism of French life. He came to power, and had no high words to sound, no principles to lay down. The key of his first speech as Prime Minister was that he was a man who had adapted himself to his function. He came, among the Unified Socialists, looking ahead, though enjoying the present, round the acid prophet M. Jules Guesde and the mellow M. Jaurès, ever orotundly building the city of the future ; among the Royalists and the Bonapartists, touchingly rallied round a shadow ; among the Progressists, who are the Conservatives and vow the country has gone to the dogs ; among the so-called Social Democrats and the equally so-called Socialist Radicals, who are all moderates and live upon watch-words from the days when the Third Republic was young and required swaddling. He came without a watch-word of his own, without a principle, a battle-cry, an ideal. A French politician without an ideal seemed marvellous. He came a mere man, and said he was only that, a man called to the governing function who had adapted or meant to adapt himself to it : a mere man among watch-words and battle cries. The mellifluous audacity of the man as he spoke, with his rich voice, seemed marvellous : to come without a heavenly call to save and regenerate, without a panacea, without even a

policy, except for to-morrow morning at latest, to come with hands empty of all these things and merely ready to do what was to be done next. The astonishment was so great that when the mere, plain, unprincipled man came, the battle cries suddenly staled. He said he was merely a man adapted to his function, he seemed suddenly to be merely an organ, to have appeared merely because the function called him into use. But what other definition is there of the man of the hour? He ceased to exist as a politician, a builder of better things for other men, a pastor. He was only the instrument of the nation for the moment's work, he was just the tool the hand had looked for. He came blandly, almost calling himself a tool. He dropped his old dreams without compunction, his old friends without a sigh, he adapted himself. The Prime Minister was no longer a constructor of policies, a leader of battle, the incarnation of a cause. He was the organ fulfilling its functions; but it was strongly and suddenly felt that the function had been waiting, and that this was the organ it expected, that the right man had come for the right job at the right moment.

The realism of French life and the idealism of French politics have always gone hand in hand. The more soaring the politics the steadier the life, seemed almost the rule. When the business of politics has been the most squalid, the mental gymnastics of political theorizing had been the most dizzy. When political fancy built the most towering castles in the air, the will to live clung most doggedly to the earth. Those who lived the most steadily chose the highest flying political dreamers to represent them. The political zealot was the most reasonable citizen. The anarchist paid his rent on the nail, and it was the staunch Conservative who lived in Bohemia. Political corruption did not make for political materialism, politicians separated public and private life, taking bribes in the one while they pursued



ideals in the other, and the era of the Panama scandals was not one in which the "watchwords of democracy" were least zealously obeyed. The Third Republic has passed through more political crises than most regimes of any kind anywhere; it has lived through them with less change to its own real life than the most politically steady commonwealth has undergone elsewhere in the same period. Panama scandals ran off it like water off a duck's back; it lay down to be walked upon by a general with a golden beard, and when the general fled to his mistress's tombstone where he shot himself, got up again refreshed and feeling fitter than ever; it was cut in two by a court-martial sentence which nearly brought civil war, then revised the sentence, dealt out justice and retribution, and united again; it tore up by the roots the most ancient Church in Europe, then planted it again by a settlement which in a twelvemonth was made probably as solid as the old charter of centuries. The Third Republic did or bore all this because its real life throughout remained untouched. A man may be a daredevil safely outside, if his home go on its wise level way. The homes of the Third Republic have gone on wisely and with a crafty cautiousness.

Out-of-doors, in the political world, experiments were made, dangers courted, crises invited, mad games played and risky feats tried: politics were sport for idealists, not a business for realists. Not a politician so low as to seem practical. To this day, plain words sound cynical in the French rostrum. To aim at to-morrow's job is a paltry and sordid policy; reform must be for all time and final. What is done must be done under the aspect of eternity, and to-morrow, if needs be, can wait until what is done be done perfectly, logically, definitely and for ever. Patching up and muddling through, dear to our English temperament, are a horror to the classic French political mind.

At every moment of the world's journey the course must be shaped towards the ultimate goal of perfection. To-day is nothing ; we are working for posterity. In our humdrum lives, let us, as much as you like, think only of to-day and to-morrow, and of putting by the baby daughter's dower. In public life we are handing on the torch, we are heirs to a great inheritance and bear a great burden of responsibility. We do not plan for ourselves, better indeed let ourselves be uncomfortable for a while, if thereby we can plan the better for the ages to come and with the more perfect finality. Better in fact, on reflection, merely to talk about what we are going to do, than to do it in haste imperfectly. Thus the policies of sounding words and magnificent formulæ (usually barbarous philologically) proceed much less from hypocrisy than from idealism. The aversion from rule-of-thumb politics is genuine and deep-rooted ; to be able to talk of great constructive policies and unable to carry them out is human. To talk high politics and to take bribes is also human. The handful of corrupt politicians in France (whose simple methods the merest town-councillor in the United States could put to shame) are not the less honest idealists because their palms itch. They also plan all things for all time. A deplorable neediness compels them to be on the make in the meanwhile. But that is no reason why their principles should be any the less abhorrent from makeshift temporizing policies.

The Third Republic has been more idealist in its politics than any other regime except the short-lived generous dream of the Republic of 1848. Contempt for the squalid hand-to-mouth policy of the Second Empire was in the blood of statesmen after 1875. Guizot's "enrich yourselves" of the earlier monarchy was still remembered and quoted with loathing. The Third Republic has been as realist in

its life as any other regime. What it has politically lived through, it survived because it lived steadily ; what it has politically accomplished, it achieved because the will to live realized the needful out of the speculations of the will to build castles in the air and talk about them. The Third Republic is perhaps at the beginning of a great revolution ; it may be making up its mind to inoculate the idealism of its politics with the realism of its life.

Perhaps M. Briand will be the doctor. He was preparing the needle when he presided over the elections. A decade had led up to that moment, a decade of settling down, of waning theories and waxing matter-of-factness. The Dreyfus case was the latest outburst of political and public idealism in France, and it may prove to have been the last for some time to come. I do not think the Third Republic will wed an Idea again yet awhile, and the chances are that it will be M. Briand who, priest as well as surgeon, will affiance her to Fact. A war would not give the lie to this forecast, for it would be very much a practical war, a war precisely to defend the cherished facts of the people's life. The Dreyfus case was the latest idea which won the people. No great popular upheaval was ever so far removed from the solid earth of the people's interest, and no two sides in a civil war ever fought so furious a game for love before. From Emile Zola to the day labourers who did battle to free and clear a moneyed Jew officer, not one Dreyfusard stood to win anything, but had everything to lose ; from Paul Déroulède to the placid "petite bourgeoisie" which wrecked its peace of mind to uphold the "honour of the army" represented by a bare half-dozen of utterly insignificant officers, no more anti-Dreyfusards than Dreyfusards had aught to gain. The Dreyfus case died, it died long before Dreyfus himself had been cleared and reinstated, and nothing is as dead as the Dreyfus case now. It died, and a

new temper came over the people, a temper which may mean that "l'Affaire" will have been the last national idea. No more such causes as the duel of justice and patriotism. Realism began when the armies fell to pieces, when the tithe of Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards on the make neatly threw the rest over and joined forces to grab what they could of the spoils of the war which others had fought. That we may politely call individual realization, and was an insignificant factor. The growing realism of the people was the meaning sign. The adventure of the Socialist Parliamentary Party was probably the most characteristic episode of the time, when the Socialists, not then unified, were welded into the famous bloc and became an element of a very practical working majority. They were not only an element in it, but a most active and most practical element. Idealists proved remarkable realists: that neither the party nor the country has forgotten. "Unification" came in 1905, and cutting three-quarters of the French Parliamentary Socialist Party off from the bourgeois bloc, drew it back into idealist isolation again, but the party kept the taste of power and remembered the lessons of practice, and the country retained the impression of a Socialist Party that had shown how efficiently it could pull together with a governing majority. The country learned to take, not Socialism, but Socialists seriously, since they had proved realists when they had had the chance. The party had had that taste of realities which is never forgotten. It was a double defeat of idealism which must have lasting effects. "Unification" notwithstanding, the Socialists can never forget that their theory was once tainted with the practice of power, and that they enjoyed the taint; the country remembers that whatever the city of the future may be the Socialist Party once played an exceedingly shrewd part in the city of the present, and



when the country votes Socialist it does so with that recollection at the back of its mind. What the party has gained, it gained in spite, not because, of "unification" and because the country took its idealist isolation less seriously than its realistic alliance. The adventure of the Socialist Party with the bloc did not advance Socialism, but promoted Socialists to the rank of at least occasional realists. Both that adventure and the effect it had upon the country were signs of the times.

The Dreyfus case was the last popular idealist cause. The Dreyfus case made M. Clemenceau, or rather put him together again after the old scandals which had knocked him to pieces. He rose to power on the wings of that idea ; M. Briand was not heard of till that idea was as dead as the dodo : nothing better marks the difference between the temperaments, the careers, the fortunes of the two men, and between the parts they played and may, one of them indeed will, still play in the affairs of the nation. M. Clemenceau became the man of the hour because he had been the man of an idea ; he rose as the champion of an abstract cause. He had defended the idea of justice with all his wit, and the country called him to rule. No ideal cause set M. Briand upon the throne ; on the contrary, rising, he shed the abstractions of his first political years, and dropped his early idealist friends, the Anarchist-Communists. He precisely rid himself of what dreams had filled his past : it was precisely one of the dreams of M. Clemenceau's past that bore M. Clemenceau to power. M. Clemenceau in office acted up to none of his ideals, but he had had them ; M. Briand was chosen on the strength of no principle, he may have been chosen because he had not any. He thus enjoyed the superiority that having used no ideal ladder to climb by he could not be accused of having thrown one down when he had got to the top. But



that is a personal incident in a career, and the national fact is that the nation in choosing M. Briand chose for the first time in many years a man not on principle but for practice, not the man of an idea but a handy man. Will M. Clemenceau prove to have been the last man the Third Republic chose ideally? It is certain that already he was an instrument of transition and that he knew it. In the time of his power I described him once as a great realist; I did not know that a greater would follow. He did grasp realities suddenly, after having been raised to power as an idealist. He grasped M. Jaurès, building the city of the future, wrestled with the honey-lipped prophet, threw and crushed him beneath the weight of the Present, accounted for and justified. That joust was what he began his tenure of office with. Ever after when M. Jaurès again cried, "Behold what shall be," he answered, "Look at things as they are," and the tip in the lobbies was that if Jaurès "interpellated" a vote of confidence in Clemenceau was a sure thing. M. Clemenceau in power dropped principles, battle cries and dogmas, though chosen because of them. He kept the country down to facts, and Parliament kept him in office accordingly. No such bearer of standards in opposition furlled them with such alacrity in power. Impotent enemies called M. Clemenceau cynical; he was only learning to know a new temper in the nation, and it was his way of "adapting himself," though he did not hit upon M. Briand's bland way of putting it. The fatal flaw in his adaptation of course was that he had had principles and that they had brought him to power. They paralysed his motion, and he could never appear honestly unprincipled, but was the man with an ideal who had gone back upon it, always an ungrateful part to play. In this, the only national fact that counted was that, whether to his own advantage or not, M. Clemenceau, having been chosen

for his principles, dropped them for the sake of his practice.

The Dreyfus case was the latest outburst of idealism in France. What after that was to have been a great ideal cause of the Third Republic was diverted into the channels of the matter-of-fact. Disestablishment had long been a goal for theoreticians. From wind-bags to prophets, all had looked forward to the freeing of the State from an official allegiance to Rome (the Reformed and Jewish Churches being left out of count) as to a splendid deliverance. "Separation" was a catch-word for political quacks with their tongues in their cheeks, and a gospel for men entirely compounded of moral principles like those honest austere zealots, M. Henri Brisson and the late Ranc. The Church of Rome after the death of Leo XIII did apparently all she could to intensify the struggle and to give it the halo of a war of ideas. A politic church would have done every possible thing to level it down to a conflict of interests. "Separation" came in with the glamour of a great ideal cause—and went out reduced to a parochial measure. What had happened in the interval? M. Briand, but he was only an instrument, or an organ, the instrument of a new mood, the organ of a new function, in the nation. Not many social and political facts observed recently in any country are as curious as this change of national attitude during the process of Disestablishment in France. It was a passage from philosophic enthusiasm and pious fanaticism to businesslike rule of thumb, compromise and cheerful matter-of-fact accommodation, as the reform itself, or the revolution, passed quickly from a high and distant cause, reaching to the furthest truths and "putting out the lights of Heaven" (M. Viviani, Minister of Labour), down to a local act for the adjustment of various ecclesiastical matters, and one might say without exaggeration

for the better settlement of certain relations between Church and State. Secularization of the State had been a great cause of the Third Republic. It was at hand and at last the great cause was to come off; M. Briand took it in hand at his first appearance in parliamentary life as "reporter" on the bill, took it in hand gently, gently fashioned it, gently shaped it, and when the great cause was ripe, it had become under his gentle treatment a quiet, sober, practical, pleasantly-turned measure, rather less shocking to the bourgeois French mind than the still proposed income-tax. The French Church looked placidly on the measure, the "green cardinals" headed by Ferdinand Brunetière recommended its adoption. Rome made very nearly half a dozen successive endeavours to embitter the struggle, but vainly. M. Briand (but he was only an instrument) was still bland. Rome would not have the "associations cultuelles"? Very well, the churches remained open to priests backed by no associations. Rome would not have the "declarations of meetings"? Very well, the churches remained open to priests without any further formality. "Me minister, not a church in France shall be closed," said M. Clemenceau; M. Briand wrought bill after bill and circular after circular (without which no French bill is comprehensible), but both Briand and Clemenceau were only instruments. They were mere expressions (what more could a statesman hope to be?) of the nation's new temper. Where was the great cause, the putting out of the lights of Heaven now? All that was left was accommodation, business-like settlements, a tradesman's adjustment of his affairs with his neighbour's—what was left was realism. Realism indeed Rome had no doubt counted upon. The Vatican's policy of peace at no price was not the mere fanaticism it seemed, and its no-compromise campaign was pushed on because it knew that compromise would come

from the other side. Had Rome not read the national temper aright, had separation proved the great idealist cause it was to have been, the Vatican would undoubtedly have accepted some terms, perhaps even the associations of the original bill of 1905. But the French nation had set its mind upon keeping to real facts and sacrificing none for any of the theories on which French politics had thriven so long. Rome could hold out quite safely. What therefore seemed on the surface impolitic, high-principled downrightness, was an ingenious calculation, which after all succeeded. It was the French State, interpreting the national temper, that compromised at several successive steps, not the Church of Rome, and the price paid by the Church of France (in loss of property which would have devolved upon associations of worship, and of payments for terms to ecclesiastics, the life pensions having been maintained) was one that did not affect Rome much. Rome had read aright with some acuteness the new French national mood. Disestablishment, before the law of 1905 was framed, was to have been one of the great idealist causes of the Third Republic, to be carried through at the point of the sword, in the name of philosophy and the betterment of mankind. The laws of 1905 and 1907 have proved to be the most business-like, practical and matter-of-fact, as they have been the swiftest and most radical, revolution of modern times.

Under M. Clemenceau's Premiership M. Briand's gentle, dexterous, and softly strong hand was shaping Disestablishment. No one marked him very attentively. M. Clemenceau went on doing picturesque things and saying sharp ones, trying them on once, but only once, at M. Briand's expense. He continued also steadily on the road to realism strewing quips all the way ; unfortunately, the realist Clemenceau almost irresistibly meant Clemenceau the cynic to the popular mind. Even M. Gustave Hervé did



not call M. Briand a cynic—liar and assassin if you like, but not cynic. M. Clemenceau fell stupidly, and the country let him tumble with the most candid determination to feign no regret ; a greater realist was known to be waiting in the wings. But before he fell he did at least one real thing, for which the country might have thanked him more ; it was the only real thing he did in office, it was one of the most real things the nation did, it was perhaps the sharpest sign of the new political realism of the Third Republic. Under his Premiership France in November, 1908, retrieved July, 1905 :\* that was a stroke of realism that counted.

It was a good omen for a new period in which France may transfuse into her politics some of the realism of her life. There was nothing idealistic about that retrieval ; war, if it had come, would have been a matter-of-fact, sordid, interested, selfish war, that is to say the only war honourably to be waged, a war in defence of the solid facts and real things of plain life. If France pulled herself together in November, 1908, it was not for glory, feats of arms or a dash à Berlin ; it was in mere animal self-preservation, the noblest cause to fight for. M. Briand's luck, which is the luck of all capable statesmen, arranged that France should have pulled herself together just in time for him to get into the saddle. There was no better way for her to begin an era of political realism ; M. Clemenceau having been thrown, the best man, the perfection of realists, an Anarchist who had " adapted " himself, was by to take his seat.

\* See Chapter IX.



## II—M. BRIAND

**M.** BRIAND showed what a realist he is by being quiet, and letting who would be clever. M. Clemenceau never could resist being brilliant; M. Briand perhaps never had the temptation to face, he certainly never gave way to it. The former completely enjoyed only the picturesqueness of life and was a realist only because he felt he had to be; the latter at least never showed that he cared for anything but things as they are without ornament. M. Clemenceau went on being picturesque and saying things that became household words; M. Briand never said anything that stuck or even that anybody marked. During all the preparation for Disestablishment, it was the former who said the words, but the latter who did the things, and he did do them. M. Clemenceau, I believe, did not understand completely until the last that all the while he was brilliantly talking his Minister of Public Instruction was placidly doing. He showed that he did not understand at an earlier stage, at all events, by trying upon him one of his famous gibes which he was a little surprised to have to take back, when, in the midst of M. Briand's silent efforts at readjusting a constitution of the Church which the Vatican had noisily rejected, he burst out with "We are in incoherency. I did not put myself there. J'y suis, j'y reste," in the House, and had to depart into the lobbies to pacify the silent but nettled M. Briand who had got up and strode out. He was also a little surprised at the end to find how extremely thorough and intelligent a realist had come up quietly and quickly to take his place, when he lost it

through one of his wanton wiles, which proved a bad blunder.

Nothing was wanton about M. Briand in public life. He had his fling of imaginativeness, when he was cheerfully and eagerly willing to take up "pike, sword, pistol, rifle" with the rest and go into battle against the bourgeoisie, when he laid methodical plans for general strikes, when he advised troopers in such cases to shoot down their officers, not the strikers. It certainly was a handsome fling, and a great many fine realists have not begun so imaginatively. But very soon after 1902, when he was first returned for Parliament, the hunger for realities came upon him. He showed keen ingenuity in feeding it during the long debates upon the Disestablishment Bill on which he was "reporter." Both the supporters and the opponents of the Bill thirsted fiercely for idealism : was not Disestablishment one of the great ideas of the Third Republic, and would it not indeed have been the latest of its great idealist causes had not precisely M. Briand had it in hand ? The opponents of Disestablishment, the clerical Royalists, Bonapartists, "Progressists" who were the extreme Conservative wing of the nominal Republicans, generally yearned for the martyrdom of the Church (not the churches, for the reformed and Jewish Churches were never taken the slightest notice of politically); the supporters, with increasing intensity as they ranged from Radicals to Socialists, all burned to defend the Republic against the monster of clericalism. Between the two idealisms stood M. Briand, and managed to find himself with extraordinary dexterity a steady diet of facts. The extreme Right alternately called the heavens to witness that the faith of its forefathers was being trampled, and refused to vote concessions to its faith, for fear of its not being trampled upon enough for political capital. The extreme Left alternately cried that Rome must be strangled

or would strangle France, and that an anti-clerical state was the only free state in which all faiths could live side by side. M. Briand the realist played off patiently, persistently and long one idealism against the other and the contradictory illusions or hypocrisies of both sides against one another. He obtained the vote of liberal and practical clauses from an anti-clerical majority, by urging upon them that it was impolitic to pander to the thirst for martyrdom of the clericals, and from the latter he obtained, not only their consent to, but often their collaboration in, several particular measures, by hinting that their adversaries would be better pleased by opposition because it would the better justify oppression. He did not care one atom for the great anti-clerical cause on the one side or the great cause of Rome on the other. All he meant was to do his best to be known afterwards as the man who framed a real Disestablishment Bill that would work. He saw where the wind would come from some near day, and that Disestablishment was not going to be one of the great idealist causes of the Third Republic, but if it were to be at all would be a mere poor humdrum practical arrangement, and must in fine be worked out with no loftier aims than the assuring of the least possible inconvenience to all concerned. That a great reform should be squalidly adjusted to the comfort of the men whom it affects was a conception entirely new then and still rather new now. All great French parties devoted to the welfare of humanity, from the convinced Roman Catholic Conservatives to the Unified Socialists, would still never shrink from throwing the nation into the greatest possible discomfort for the nation's good. But the nation (though it has as usual added to the ranks of the latter party) seems growing less inclined in actual fact to let any such party ever try anything on. The Chamber of 1902, for example, still battled for and against

Disestablishment, as a great idealist cause to be fought for or against on principle, not on sordid grounds of daily convenience. The Chamber of 1906, adjusting Disestablishment once accomplished, talked remarkably little, almost not at all, about principles, but was prosaic enough to resort—a rare thing in French politics—to rule of thumb for expediency sake : in the interval M. Briand had come to the front. The Chamber of 1910 has under his Premiership been elected on no principles whatever, but only for practice : so much did his realism achieve.

During the Chamber of 1906 he realized at least as effectually as during that of 1902. The Pope's move gave him openings, such as he might have planned himself, for being realistic. A succession of catastrophes or absurdities, or of both, threatened the country as the result of the Pope's successive refusal of measures which his own partisans in France had generally accepted, or even in several cases had themselves proposed. One day there was to be no mass said more in France, on another the entire Roman Catholic clergy of the country was to be summoned before police magistrates regularly every Monday morning, on a third the Faubourg St. Germain was to motor out to barns on deserted moors for divine service, after that a priest of demoniacal worship was to be legally qualified to celebrate the black mass in Notre Dame. For a little while the militant Church looked to an advertisement from early Christian martyrdom, and those other incorrigible idealists, the atheist anti-clericals, clamoured to inflict it upon them. But that sort of joke was beyond what the nation was prepared to stand. M. Briand was not alone in reading the country's temper—M. Clemenceau indeed put in his "*Me Minister . . .*"—but he read it the most effectually, and saw that the country wanted to be rid both of martyrs and of persecutors, and rid of both quickly, and he rid it of



them rapidly and effectually. Whether the would-be martyrs stand to gain is an open question, the persecutors have certainly gained nothing, which is precisely the country's gain. M. Briand once more cared not an atom for the principles of either side, but fed, and fed the country, on realities. Whatever compromise served, he used ; if one " circular " would not do, a new bill came along ; if the bill was not enough, more " circulars " helped it. Realism never was so shameless ; political idealism was too much shocked to look. The country on the surface has forgotten it all, in its sub-consciousness it remembers. No one who observes the French Church to-day can help remembering. Almost every Roman Catholic Church in France is national or communal property and was taken back by the State at Disestablishment ; on the order from Rome the clergy nowhere complied with the requirements of the law which would have ensured their tenure of the churches ; another law made them " occupants "—and occupants they are. They occupy, and they rule, as they should, in the churches ; not an iota of their spiritual dominion and of its material signs has changed. The Church may have lost much, or gained something, which is political freedom for any agitation, her dignitaries being no longer servants of the State, but which is a new privilege she has as yet been chary of using ; all the country cares about is that it no longer pays for public worship, and that whoso wishes to worship worships exactly as he did before. The idealists both of martyrdom and of persecution have been defeated, political realism reigns.

So did M. Briand, quite naturally, having come up on no wings either of high principle, afterwards belied, or of brilliant sayings that must fade, but on the mere bare back of facts. Of course if the country had happened to want



winged men at that moment he would be still an Anarchist-Communist politically, but he was the realist of the moment, and he answered. He disposed easily of his past Anarchist-Communism by his engaging "adaptation," and he began realizing in office. Like most statesmen he found that the best way of realizing is to tell others how to do it, and at Périgueux in October, 1909, he told all Frenchmen to make France still more pleasant. In that speech, and another at St. Chamond in April, 1909, was contained all his realization up to the election of the present Chamber, but the two speeches, though limited, often parochial, in scope, drew the traits of a people and marked the signs of its times.

By a piquant coincidence a French Prime Minister drew a suave picture of the pleasant land of France, which he urged all Frenchmen to make yet pleasanter, on the morrow of one of the fiercest outbursts of an English Chancellor of the Exchequer, which gave no amiable idea of what the pleasant language of England in public speaking was coming to. The "adapted" Anarchist-Communist melodiously sang of the charms of to-day and of the mother soil, and there was not the single jarring note of a hint that the mother had ever disinherited any of her sons or that this present day could ever be really and essentially bettered by any day to come. It was a cooing, comfortable song of contentment for all, a song of realizations to be enjoyed, a song of peace, prosperity, living and letting live, the hymn of a realist if ever there was one. Where were the idealist causes, the great reforms, the march of progress, the ever onward trend? Not a note of these trumpets was heard. It was all a soft and honeyed *carpe diem*—and M. Briand's both songs echoed pleasantly through the country as no pæans of reformers had done for years. The "adapted" Anarchist-Communist did talk about reforms—

such revolutionary reforms as "moralizing" the electorate and the elections, instituting the status of functionaries, steadying trades unions. Members of Parliament were no longer to be the purveyors of favours to their constituents. To that end proportional representation might be introduced, but with the proviso that the existence of parliaments be prolonged and perhaps partial elections be held, the Chamber being renewable for instance by thirds. But the immediate and apparently the most efficacious remedy was to be the strengthening of the local authorities of government to render them "independent of pressure" from Members of Parliament: i.e. such local authorities, already directly dependent upon the Home Office, were to be freed from the meddling of local members and the Napoleonic system of centralized government \* was to be if possible yet more firmly knit. The long advertised "status of functionaries" was to be established: that is to say, in exchange for the foregoing by civil servants of one single very doubtful right, the right to strike, the privileged position of functionaries in the country, in which they are already a nation within the nation, was to be further endowed and strengthened; no French statesman has ever thought of answering the agitation of civil servants by curtailing instead of increasing their privileges and weakening instead of strengthening their fortress-like State within the State. Trade Unionism was to be steadied by the wonderfully bold process of a legal measure to empower an union to own an account at a bank, or otherwise to possess property, a privilege yet unheard of for French Syndicates. Such were the reforms sketched by the "adapted" Anarchist-Communist: they pleased and satisfied the country. A strange adventure happened to an extra reform—so revolutionary a proposal as that, already talked about with

\* See Chapter IX.

bated breath for several years, of instituting an income-tax. It appeared in the first reports of one of the speeches (that at St. Chamond), but there was no trace left of it in the final and official version. Was the startling reform mentioned or was it not? Was it considered on mature reflection by the great realist to be too revolutionary to appear in official print? The other "reforms" were enough for a realist country—a country which as a matter of fact asks for no reforms at all but wants to be let alone, a country which wanted precisely not a reformer but a realist.

More than speeches, the public welcome paints a public man. This "adapted" Anarchist-Communist was received by the country as the champion of the bourgeoisie, the man of no substantial past and of no substance was accepted as their representative by the most traditional and substantial middle class in the world, without his having even so much as asked the favour of representing them. The public mind seemed to form M. Briand after its own image. He had little to do but to sit and have his portrait taken. He had not even to go to the pains of recanting, beyond saying that he had "adapted" himself. He never indeed specifically renounced Anarchist-Communism, and for aught the public heard him say, might be at heart an Anarchist-Communist still. He made no confession, advertised no principles, never put up as the champion of the realist bourgeoisie. The latter took him at its own, not his own, estimation; he had the luck of never being called upon to estimate himself. It was done for him, perhaps before he knew, almost before anyone knew. Never so calmly and naturally did a man become a representative man before, and a man representative of things and ideas which he certainly by personal experience, and apparently by temperament, knew nothing about. He was a man of only the smallest bourgeoisie himself, without family substance

or family traditions, which in France have a money value, and his experience had been Anarchist-Communism. The French bourgeoisie took him as their symbol. He stood as a sign for their steadiness, their solidity and their realism. He was their safe man—whom in other circumstances they might have called an adventurer—and they depended upon him : such is the power of a personality that strikes the public imagination. He had not struck it in any dramatic way as M. Clemenceau did, but he had had the power to impress an image upon the public mind, the image of the out-and-out realist. The public had painted its own portrait of him : he once nearly blundered by over-acting up to that portrait, when on May Day he turned Paris into an armed camp against absent revolutionists, but the usual ineffectualness of the revolutionists saved him before the elections. The portrait may or may not have been truly lifelike, but for public men what they actually are is less important than what the public makes them out to be.

M. Briand the “ adapted ” Anarchist-Communist stood for everything that is solid and quiet in France, when the country went to the polls. The portrait which the country had drawn of him after its own image hovered all over the elections. None were ever more peaceful or more stolid, and they afforded one more remarkable proof of the conservatism of a nation which has made more revolutions than any other. The parties which live—poorly—by agitation argued that the country voted peacefully out of general disgust with everything, but never could explain why a disgusted country, supposing it no longer had the heart to hope for regeneration from the parliamentary system, should take the trouble to vote at all. The country, which lives serenely in spite of agitations, presented the most remarkable picture ever seen of equanimity at the



polls. At the elections of 1906 walls were covered with sanguinary curses. The public strolled up, read them carefully from the first frantic word to the last, and strolled off again. "The bloodiest Government of modern times. . . ." "The rape of our liberties and the murder of our rights. . . ." "Cut out buttonholes in the bellies of the bourgeois, . . ." the working-man holding his eldest boy by the hand read on the walls, and went off without even shrugging his shoulders to treat himself to a black currant syrup and vermouth mixed and his boy to a pomegranate syrup with seltzer. In 1906 the contrast between the brimstone language of politicians and the syrup and water demeanour of the electorate was ridiculous. In 1910 there was not even that contrast left. The 1906 candidate who had called his opponent an assassin called him merely a bounder in 1910 ; the 1906 liar became a person whose opinions we will not qualify in 1910 ; in electoral language 1910 was the merest shadow of 1906. The public read on with the same equanimity, unchanged ; whatever candidates' language be, whether furious or polite, measured or beyond bounds, the public always reads on with the same equanimity. But the change in canvassing language was important ; if the public read peacefully of political lying and assassination, with how much more stolidity did it not take mere equivocation and manslaughter ? If public peaceableness remain the same, the subsiding of political fury must be the more significant. The general elections of 1910 were the quietest and most conservative France has held under the Third Republic. The bland face of the " adapted " M. Briand smiled throughout over them. He had announced that Government pressure through the Prefects upon the electorate would be abolished, and it is believed that he did his best to that end. But Government pressure at election times is to a great extent an ancient



myth. Constituents when they bear the burden of such pressure, bear it after all chiefly because they like it ; the pressure for the most part is the pressure of their own innate worship for authority, and it is conceivable even that they might throw off the Napoleonic prefectoral system if they really wanted to. Anyhow, whether Government pressure were removed or not, France voted exactly as if it had not been removed. The 1910 elections were the most peaceable and the most conservative yet held under the Third Republic, because they were the most realistic, and M. Briand presided over them as the great realist. He might have offered, and the country might have asked for, a thousand dreams ; not one was asked for or offered. The men and the parties who were returned were those who actually made the fewest promises. The jokes of the Paris boulevards, about the sops thrown to a hungry public by deputies ready to offer the moon, have no relation whatever to the temper of the country. The country never asked less for the moon than at the last election. The only genuine difficulty is to determine whether it really did ask for anything, save to be let alone ; that it unmistakably did ask. No country politically so idealistic in the past ever showed such contempt for ideas in the present, and the France of so many theoretical revolutions had never before proved so realistic.

Parties and programmes showed the same complete stability. A comparison of the state of parties \* shows

\* Chamber elected in 1902 :—

Socialists . . . . .	45	} Bloc 353.
Socialist Radicals . . . . .	135	
Radicals . . . . .	90	
Republicans of the Left . . . . .	83	
Progressists . . . . .	97	} Opposition 237.
Nationalists . . . . .	55	
Reactionaries . . . . .	85	
1 vacant seat . . . . .	1	

that the only change of any importance was the increase of the Unified Socialists by twenty odd seats, but that does not imply any change whatever in the mood of the country. It would of course be a very ill-informed student of France who would in general conclude that the return of Socialist Members of Parliament means the Socialism of their constituents. In the particular case of 1910 the increase of the Unified Socialist Party actually proved in a sense the Conservatism of the country, though hardly the honesty of the Conservatives. Almost without exception the additional Unified Socialist members were returned by a coalition of the Socialist constituents with Royalist, Bonapartist, and other anti-Republican voters. The latter, who do not of

Chamber elected in 1906 :—

Unified Socialists . . . .	54	} Working majority 361.
Independent Socialists . . . .	20	
Socialist Radicals . . . .	135	
Radicals . . . .	116	
Republicans of the Left . . . .	90	
Progressists . . . .	68	
Nationalists . . . .	30	
Reactionaries . . . .	78	
	<hr/> 591	

Chamber elected in 1910 :—

Unified Socialists . . . .	75	} Probable working majority 350.
Independent Socialists . . . .	24	
Socialist Radicals . . . .	} 258	
Radicals . . . .		
Republicans of the Left . . . .	78	
Progressists . . . .	70	
Reactionaries . . . .	90	
2 vacant seats . . . .	2	
	<hr/> 597	

For convenience, I give in brief a description of the above parties. The Socialists during the Chamber of 1902 were in the governing majority called the bloc. The "unification" of Socialism at the Amsterdam Congress of 1904 divided French Parliamentary Socialism in 1905 into two unequal fractions, the larger "Unified"

course really represent French Conservatism except nominally, followed as usual a dog-in-the-manger policy of giving their vote to no substantial party of Government at all, where they could not command an anti-Republican majority. Instead, on their old principle of the *politique du pire*, they plumped for the Unified Socialists to spite the Republic. This was done openly in dozens of constituencies. The Unified Socialist Party, being always at the poll, and frequently in the House, not at all a party of principle, socialist or otherwise, as M. Jules Guesde would have it, but essentially, to the delight of M. Jaurès, a practical business party, everywhere accepted the compact complacently. Anti-Republican voters had thus the satisfaction of increasing the Unified Socialist Party in the Chamber by twenty odd members, out of spite to the Republic. The increase may have some effect in parliamentary tactics, but it obviously means nothing as a sign of the temper of

Socialist Party pledged to support no "bourgeois" government, and the smaller miscellaneous party of Independent Socialists and Social Democrats who remained with the majority. The Socialist Radicals and Radicals have for long past formed the bulk of the majority. The Republicans of the Left (Waldeck-Rousseau Party), represented chiefly by the "Democratic Republican Alliance," which was founded in 1901, and is now forming a larger party, the "Democratic Republican Left," are usually, but not invariably, included in the majority. The Progressists (Mélinae Party) are Reactionaries who are officially Republican, but half of whom would accept a Royalist, Bonapartist, or other Reactionary revolution. The parties of the Independent Socialist and combined, and now undistinguishable, Socialist Radicals and Radicals, of the latter and the Republicans of the Left, of the latter and the Progressists, of the latter and the Liberals, respectively overlap on one another, and the above figures, accordingly, are only approximate, as far as those parties are concerned. The Reactionary Party includes (1) the Liberals (M. Jacques Piou's Party), who are the party of the Church of Rome; (2) the Nationalists, who, in part nominally Republican, are the "patriotic" party formed during the Dreyfus case by anti-Dreyfusards; (3) the Bonapartists; (4) the Royalists.

the country. The country has never been less socialistic than it proved itself at the last election. In fact, the real wonder in France is that Socialism makes so little progress. The only genuine majority in the most recently elected French Parliament is the party of realists. Most of the names of the French Parliamentary parties are misnomers, among which one of the most marked is the name of the Socialist Radicals who are hardly radical and not in the least socialist. One need only look at who elected them, one need only observe the elections at Moyenneville en Brie, which are described on another page,\* to understand. Independent Socialists, Radicals, Democratic Republicans are the real Conservatives of the Third Republic. Some way off, yet next in Conservatism, come the Unified Socialists, whose idealism, when all is said and done, aims at changing, not abolishing, the Republic. The real Revolutionists are the Reactionaries ready for any leap in the dark out of the present state of things. Nobody knows why the fractions of parties described as simply Republican are not described also as Socialist, like the Socialist Radicals: they are neither more nor less Socialist. The socialism of Unified Socialists does not mean much, the socialism of Socialist Radicals means less, and the plain Republican parties might call themselves socialist for all it would hurt their principles. It is indeed quite certain that they will call themselves socialist some near day, by when probably the entire French Parliament will be socialist, barring the Royalists and other Clerical conservatives, Christian socialism never having caught on in France. The most perplexing thing in French politics is the self-labelling of most of the parties with the wrong labels. The labels in 1910 were the same as in 1906, but a degree more misleading. The great un-named party of realists may be said to

\* Chapter III.

include the so-called Independent Socialists or Social Democrats, the co-called Socialist Radicals and Radicals, the so-called Republican Democrats, and sometimes the Progressists ; the idealist minority includes at the one end the Unified Socialists and at the other the Royalists, Bonapartists, "Liberals," Nationalists, and usually the "Progressists." Most of the latter parties are idealist by necessity, as there is not the slightest prospect of any of the causes which they defend acquiring a solid existence in fact, no probability, for instance, that the d'Orléans or the Bonapartes will ever again reign in France, none that the Church of Rome will ever again recover temporal power in France, little that French patriotism will be ex-acerbated again into a picturesque jingoism for some time to come. At the other idealist pole, the Unified Socialists continue of course to be idealists on principle. It would be as much as their doctrinal position is worth to be openly and publicly practical, when any dramatic debate is on, or any political question strikes the popular imagination, and M. Guesde ever has an awful reproof ready for M. Jaurès, if the latter's innate inclination for the facts of life gets the better of his acquired dogma of integral Socialism. Yet Unified Socialist theorism is still riddled with lurking yearnings for facts. The day when it tasted real power has not been forgotten ; the day when it revelled in realities will return. The taste of power is never lost, and the memory of the days of the "bloc" still remains at the back of the Socialist mind. Whenever such days return, the Unified Socialists will be found quite ready for realization. Since "Unification" they have kept aloof from bourgeois governments, but they have often itched to hold the latter's places. If ever they attain by themselves to government—or rather, when they do, for they certainly will—theirs will not be the most idealistic government of modern times. A Unified Socialist



Cabinet in office will, when it gets there, give points to any other political school of realism.

The great realist party is the majority, but it is not merely realist because it is the majority, it is above all the majority because it is realist. Any majority anywhere clings to facts, having the handling of the substance of political power and political profits ; but the great realist party was returned in a majority, because it was realist when it went to the polls. It represents precisely the growing hunger of the country for plain, immediate facts, instead of the theories of to-morrow. It was returned in a majority because it had no theories. Socialist Radicals, Radicals, Democrats, etc., came in because they had no ideals ; they were deliberately elected by the country because they had not the ghost of a programme among them.

This would seem a quite natural way of electing a Parliament in England, where the essential and oldest traditions of politics are matter-of-fact, and where the traditional character of the political man is that of a public servant employed in the nation's everyday business. In France it is a new conception, or one at least that had been hardly heard of since the First Revolution. Political idealism which does not do the nation's mere daily business but brings up the nation the way it should go, which is not the country's servant but the country's mentor, dies hard. It will take a long time to die in France, and will retain at least the appearance of health during the four-year life of the present Chamber. The very realists elected because they had no programmes will continue feigning from force of habit that the nation has a thirst for ideals and will call upon succeeding Governments to slake it. "The nation craves for ideals. Has the Government satisfied it? France wants high causes. The Government must give her them or go," will be the song of the Opposition when any Cabinet

seems unsteady on its legs. The country does not in the least crave for high causes, but a hallowed tradition has it that if it doesn't it ought to. Successive Governments will be objurgated in the same way, and the continuous policy of each will be at once to appease the idealism of politicians and not to irritate the realism of the nation, to keep theorists busy and not to disturb the practical life of the country, to give the former food enough for their imagination without taking from the facts on which the latter feeds, to bring in measures that will satisfy the hungriest idealists in Parliament yet at the same time will not interfere with the nourishment of realists with the largest appetite in the country. M. Briand with singular shrewdness inaugurated this policy. "What does the public want?" he solemnly considered. He sent out every few days earnest little paragraphs to the papers: "The Government is studying the wishes of the Nation, the Government has caused the programmes of the elected Members of Parliament to be tabulated and classified. The Government will proceed thoroughly and without haste; but the Government is determined not to appear before Parliament without a serious and definite programme of reforms for the country. The country and Parliament will judge the Government upon its merits, but at all events will have a bold and decisive programme to judge it by, one on which it will stake its fortunes." To read the earnest paragraphs one might have supposed France was entering upon a new era of essential reforms, of great upheavals, regenerating probably but certainly fundamental. The tabulation and classification of the electoral "professions of faith" of the Members of Parliament returned was a wonderful operation, performed with admirable method and logic, and it produced wonderful results. It disclosed, for instance, that 284 deputies "did not allude to social reform" in their elec-

tioneering campaign out of a total of 597 ; that 380 of them approved an income-tax, which the majority of their constituents, as far as the observer can judge, detest ; that 416 advocated the reform of the " Administration," the last thing that ever will be reformed in France ; that 375 upheld the " status of functionaries," and only one had the daring to disapprove of it ; that 201 opposed a State monopoly of alcohol and 212 one of insurances, only 75 supporting the former and 101 the latter \* ; and that 271 were in favour of Proportional Representation.

This was the first time in history that such an index of the country's desiderata, expressed through the electoral " platforms " of the members successful at the polls, had been drawn up. M. Briand must have had his tongue in his cheek when he gave the order to draw it up. Never was a Government so eager to give a nation all the reforms, the most fundamental and the most radical, it wanted ; the Government yearned for reform, chafed with impatience to begin. What does the public want ? We have hastened earnestly to find out, here are the great causes we will strive for, or perish in the attempt : proportional representation, administrative reform, the " status of functionaries," Trade Union ownership, an income-tax. It was an amazing programme. A Prussian junker would have some difficulty in calling any article of it revolutionary. As a matter of fact, what the French bourgeois objects to in it as a vile, new-fangled, unheard of, socialistic, subversive and calamitous piece of revolutionism is the income-tax, and some good pieces of gold will be poured yet into the French woollen stocking before any come out of it to pay an income-tax. The " R.P." will precede it in the list of great idealist causes, and " R.P." will not alter much in Parlia-

\* " Etatisme " is not making much headway after all. See Chapter IV.

mentary politics, a turnover of from 20 to 30 seats being, according to calculations, the maximum change which would be effected in the present Chamber were it "proportionately representative." "Administrative reform" is expressly not to "break the framework of our administrative system," dating from Napoleon I. No reform ever will break that system. M. Briand's will merely group the Departments of France by fours or fives into regions, for purposes of "simplification" and a modest measure of "decentralization": as every region will have its Prefect, the latter will be four or five times less numerous, but four or five times more powerful, than now, the Home Office will have reduced, but strengthened, its corps of divisional commanders, and the measure of decentralization will be modest indeed. The status of functionaries is to safeguard their rights against "favouritism," while defining their liberties: i.e. the fortress of officialdom will become wholly inexpugnable, favouritism being at present the only weapon, if an unsatisfactory one, of public opinion against "functionarism." An influential M.P. to-day has, or had yesterday, some power over an official, which he might, or he might not, use for the public weal; in future even he will be powerless. "Judicial reform" is diffidently hinted at. Trade Union Ownership and the co-operation of capital and labour through wage-profit shares are to make for social conservatism, a truth just discovered. The income-tax is not to be "vexatious"—oh, pleasant land of France!

The labour denoted by the earnest little paragraphs was portentous; the programme brought forth was rather a small mouse. M. Briand gained his first and decisive majority in the new Parliament (with that other smart realist, King Ferdinand of the Bulgarians, listening and clapping) by a speech which, licking the mouse into shape,



made it smaller still. The "R.P." was to be merely a very careful experiment, the status of functionaries was above all not to undermine the head and font of power, the income-tax was to be even less vexatious and gentler than ever, the only thing that really was to be decisive and bold was the strong arm of authority. The House took this vigorous realism like a lamb. The adapted Anarchist-Communist seemed to intend realizing with a vengeance, realizing the Republic into Toryism, when he pictured himself as the general of a victorious army crying to his men, "Enough, no further." If the victorious Republic went back, she might fall into the arms of friends who would make short work of her. The Tory friends of the Republic would soon bury her decently if they could. But the great realist was only seeing how far he could play with power and keep it, only testing his own personal power. A deft twist or two of parliamentary legerdemain, and behold him with his great realist majority, not reduced, but increased by the "Progressists." No matter now when he may lose that majority; he will anyhow have taught a stiff lesson in realism.

The fact of course is that when M. Briand solemnly set out to find what the French public wanted he knew perfectly well it wanted little else but to be left alone. It is not indifferent to politics, it takes indeed, and has always taken, a lively interest in the political game. But it precisely has always held politics to be a game, one of the amusements in which, for instance, is when you are a dried-up, close-fisted, gnarled, old Balzacian farmer to return a Socialist member. The great idealist causes of the past were a part of the game; they never affected the serious business of life, which is living. But one may have too much of the best of games. The French nation has hitherto put little of the realism of its life into the idealism of its



politics, but Disestablishment, which might have been the last of the great theoretical reforms of the Third Republic, and has been the first of her essentially practical compromises, may prove to have marked the beginning of a new era.

France may be learning to adapt to her political affairs the sense of reality which governs her life, precisely at a moment when the English people seems to be learning to govern its politics by a new theoretical sense, which never before governed its politics or its life. A critic, no doubt imbued with the traditional idea of a mercurial France, was once good enough to describe a study of mine upon the parallel development of English and French Socialism as "one long paradox." Perhaps he will call the statement that political France is growing more practical as political England grows more theoretical a short paradox. The French mind has always been theoretical and idealistic, more in politics than in life; the English mind has been idealistic occasionally in life but never in politics, and has never been theoretical either in life or in politics. A political spirit which seeks precise constitutional definition in black and white, where the elastic unwritten law of custom sufficed before, and the assertion and limitation in legal texts of rights and privileges which rested upon and were bounded by tradition, is new in England, but a very old political spirit in France. A House of Lords which, in the interest, as it holds, of social preservation, challenges an unwritten popular right, over-reaches itself, must give in, then turns to reforming itself, does a remarkable thing in England, but one which would have been done long ago in France, where no Chamber of Peers would ever have respected an unwritten popular right for a week; the only truly English part of the performance was the delightful self-stultification of the belated self-reform. A House of

Commons which out of revenge is not content with victory *de facto*, but must rub it in *de jure*, and pursue it up to the conquest of fresh power, not merely understood but emphasized in categorical words, is also doing a comparatively new thing in England, but one which would have been done long before in France, where in the political world no sudden conflicts or long rivalries of classes, interests and powers were ever patched up by bargains and compromises, and where political rights and duties have always been precise and defined, or lapsed and were shirked. French opinion dramatized the conflict of Lords and Commons, just because methods new to England were hailed by it as familiar, and because it at once on the strength of them jumped to conclusions based on its theoretical and precise political standard. The Lords were the old regime ; the Commons were a Constituent assembly as in 1789. The Lords with all their faults had " made England," and it was grievous to think that they were to be overthrown, even when one acknowledged that the job for the sake of the Rights of Man had to be done. Nay, the Lords were doing it themselves, and a new night of the Fourth of August was approaching, when, like the French nobility, they would stand up in the Assembly and of their own will forego their privileges. French opinion had no conception of the innumerable and infinite fictions beneath which the reality of English politics comfortably moves on, and heard incredulously that the Lords are not what they seem to outsiders. One great amazement, for instance, was their voting the Budget of 1910 without a murmur after all, and tacitly promising never to throw out a Budget again. What had happened to the well defined drama, and where was the neat, straight conflict ? The latter if it continue upon broad issues of principle will remain dramatic and interesting ; if it tails off into practical British compromises it will

begin to bore French opinion. The French (rather naturally) will never be able to understand the pure realism of English politics, and the delicate and complicated governing instrument of Crown, Commons and Lords which has grown not been made, which rests on no principle but on practice, and has no *raison d'être* except to do its ordinary daily work satisfactorily, any more than they can understand how a people can possibly remain still far less military than they, that buries with solely military pomp a king who earned the name of peace-maker, and that a people which not only accepts but welcomes the mediæval stage setting of the proclamation of his successor should yet be at least as democratic in reality as they.

These, and the whole British attitude towards the Crown, the snobbishness and the independence, the fulsome adulation and the patronizing advice and criticism, are mysteries to the French people, which if it ever take unto itself a king again, will either worship him in person or cut his head off after a time, and will most probably do both in quick succession. In the same way it is an equal mystery to the British mind that the French people which has been the most theoretical, idealistic and revolutionary in its politics can remain the most practical, realistic and conservative in its life.

Yet it is true that both peoples seem to be taking a leaf from each other's books. The one is learning theory, the other practice, in politics. If political Britain is learning to think imperially, political France is learning to think of realities. British Imperialism might easily have been invented by the theoretical French mind, and is in the nature of scientific hypotheses such as are peculiarly endeared to the latter. If it had not yet been thought of, the British people would be the last people in the world we should expect to think of it. A theoretical doctrine of the

kind would be considered quite foreign to the English political mind. The custom of the latter has almost always been to depend upon facts and to ignore principles. Whithersoever we have been led in politics, facts have led us, not principles, and when, rarely, we have taken sudden determinations and entered suddenly upon new courses, political realities of the moment prompted us, not theories of general application. When France *fecit saltus* it has always been for the sake of principles, not of facts ; she leapt at theories, she did not jump at new realities. Political England has looked at theories from the ground of fact ; political France has looked at facts from the eyries of theory. When our facts seem to shift, we have no tried theories to look up to ; the ground we think feels shaky, and we make a wild dash at Tariff Reform. France in politics has usually been shaken only by her theories, and she has sometimes lost sight of her political facts. But she may be learning to keep them more closely in sight, as we perhaps are learning to project our political imagination beyond facts to theories. Thus France will be narrowing the distance between her politics and her life, the separation between which makes the idealism of the former and the realism of the latter seem perhaps even more marked owing to the sharp contrast than they are, while we on the contrary shall be drawing a new boundary line between our life and our politics, between which there is little contrast. Our public and collective spirit is at least as realistic as our private and individual ; indeed, one might find on examination that it is a good deal more so. If we do put some new idealism into our politics, we might indeed find the where-withal in our lives. The French public and collective spirit is decidedly more idealistic than the private and individual, and the new realism in French politics will be derived from French life. But in the long run, living being generally

looked upon as a practical thing everywhere, the result for both countries will be that in England life will tend to be divorced from politics, which have hitherto been perhaps the most realistic thing there was in England, and that on the contrary in French they will be brought together. Such theory as Imperialism in England and such practice as Disestablishment in France are examples which seem to be pointing the way. A political theory which is peculiarly un-English, in that it does not spring from facts but forces facts into line with it, which has been made, and has not grown as all other English political ideas have, and which has acquired strength and solidity from artificial building up and elaboration, not from instinctive development, is one to delight the French political mind. Political practice which takes a radical and up-rooting reform, and in the face of every apparently insurmountable obstacle, applies it as a measure of pure expediency, which meets every difficulty with compromise, dodges every plain issue, defeats all wrecking attempts by judicious surrender, and sacrifices every principle to rule of thumb, because the only end to be sought is a practical working arrangement, is a typical English method: French Disestablishment was conceived on entirely French lines of pure political theory, it was carried out by the ancient purely British process of successfully muddling through. Some day M. Briand, otherwise the most un-English statesman I ever met, may be remembered as the man who first taught modern France to put realism into her politics.



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### *III. Socialism and People*

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SOCIALISM is a power in French politics, not in French life. Its pledged battalion in Parliament often rules Governments ; it has raised men to Cabinet rank, and at least its name is the password for an army of politicians. The " Unified Socialist " party in the Chamber is over seventy strong, half the governing Radical party calls itself " Socialist Radical," and no Republican majority could be formed now against the name of Socialism. Collectivism, expropriation, with or without compensation, nationalization, State purchase of railways as a preliminary step, national monopolies, and State ownership of mines, of vineyards, and of docks, and of wheatfields to come, national confiscation of land and capital, have been in the political air for years. Political leaders have played every variation on the tunes, and their hearers know them by heart. In no country is Socialism so much of a household word and such a political power ; yet probably in none is it less a household thing and less of a social power. France is more easy to know superficially, but perhaps even less easy to know deeply, than England. We have our glorious inconsistencies in the manner of our national life, and rejoice in them jealously, but we are uncommonly practical in our politics. We have many kinds of imagination, but not the political. The French people has political imagination supremely, but remains deeply practical and logical in its real life. We are constantly surprising foreigners by the contrast between our level-headed, occasionally dull politicians, and our own some-

times wayward selves. Our public men are intensely sober, but has not English individual thought been as gloriously drunk as any in Europe? We seem to keep our politicians to sober us; France chooses hers imaginatively. She amazes observers by the opposite contrast between the sobriety of herself and the intoxication of her politicians. Perhaps the English minds given to drink do not go into politics; the French do: France likes them to do so. She keeps public men to satisfy her imagination, and she thinks her wildest political thoughts through them. They are never the drag upon her; she always remains the drag upon them. When we go to the polls we brace ourselves up, or rather down, and if we have perchance been flying high before, tell ourselves that now we must keep to the earth. The Frenchman soars when he goes to vote, dreams of the millennium, loves his dream, and is often at the top of his flight when he drops the paper into the ballot box. Then he goes home to his own level, practical, solid everyday life. Nor does he constantly repent at leisure. He naturally grumbles at his deputy after he has elected him. Of course he pesters him with requests for favours: one may call granting them the useful function of the deputy, while the ornamental is to satisfy his elector's imagination, who likes watching a political arena upraised above the ordinary earth on which he moves and great political struggles in the air. His idea is that some good may come of them in the long run. He has a feeling that it is not worth while paying Members of Parliament merely to do the dull business of the nation—though, it is true, he does call it paying rather high when they raise their own salaries from £360 to £600 a year. We keep ours, without paying them, to the grindstone, but the French would prefer that theirs should give the nobler spectacle of a battle of ideas. Thus a great forensic encounter between M. Jaurès, champion of

Socialism, and M. Clemenceau, tilting at him under the pennant of Individualism, rejoices the French electorate. The Chamber disappoints its constituents, not because, doing almost nothing at all, it does nothing practical, but because it does nothing ideal. Doing just as little, it might satisfy the electorate were it more often a ring for such tournaments of ideas, and in the public estimation a certain squalor in some of its debates might be compensated more easily by more frequent excursions into abstract sociology than by greater attention to plain business. Who can imagine such a duel as that of Socialism versus Individualism in the House of Commons, or picture the feelings of the British taxpayer if any such ever were to come off? English politics can be studied through English politicians, for it is generally safe to say that these are not soaring above the heads of their countrymen. The politics of France must be studied with one eye constantly on the French people itself, which gives its public men rope into regions far away from its own surroundings.

Watch small borough constituencies, somewhere in the oldest part of real France, the Ile de France, Champagne, or along the Loire, on the two successive ballot Sundays at a fortnight's interval during the process of returning "Socialist Radical" deputies. The leading chemist, true to Flaubert tradition, is "advanced" and eloquent. The business genius of the place who startled Moyenneville-en-Brie last year by his enterprise in the opening bazaar "At the City of Paris," which is killing all the little old shops, is a "Collectivist"—in politics. The "Receiver in Registration" has of late added "Socialist" to his former Radical label. The "Keeper of Mortgages" is inclining that way, but still makes reservations. Dry, old, blue-smocked "Père Baigne-dans-le-beurre," whose nickname thus vividly tells the local belief, which he strongly deprecates, that he is

rolling in money, hum's and ha's mysteriously over political questions, but drops terse hints that, after all, one must go with one's time, and that Balandreau (the chemist's candidate) seems a man of the age. The Sub-Prefect can be left out of account, distraught as he is between his official instructions from the Home Office for the elections and the suspicion that behind them lurk other unofficial meanings, and wondering in agony whether he be not expected to canvass secretly for this man while openly pushing that other, and how far he may not blunder, either by lukewarmness or by too much zeal. The parish priest may also be passed over, as he is bound hand and foot to the local Royalist squire, who has the estates but no longer the influence of a squire, and to a lost cause. When he was a servant of the State he could afford sometimes to be a Republican and even a Radical. But the Republic by Disestablishment has made a present of him to her opponents, and now he must go against the Republic to make a livelihood, even if he had been on her side before, which, indeed, he seldom was.

The "Socialist Radical" candidate is returned, the Café du Commerce rejoices, the chemist and the business genius of Moyenneville exult at dominoes, the Receiver in Registration and the Keeper of Mortgages are less exuberantly satisfied, as becomes their official position, the Père Baigne-dans-le-beurre nods his head and utters short, sage remarks, which, without committing him, may be understood to imply that, although (possibly) he may not have actually plumped Socialist Radical, yet the new deputy may, since he now is the new deputy, count upon his prudent approval and support, with certain mysterious reservations which nothing will persuade the Père Baigne-dans-le-beurre to state in so many words. Politically, the net result of it all is that Moyenneville-en-Brie has sent a Socialist Radical to

the chamber, who will form one of the links between the Government majority and the Unified Socialist party in a chain which often snaps but is constantly being mended again, and that is all the political world cares about. But if we continue to keep an eye on Moyenneville, shall we find the social result to be that Moyenneville has taken one step towards Socialism ? The chemist has gone back to his drugs, the business genius to his " City of Paris," and Père Baigne-dans-le-beurre to his vines and his beets, and vines, beets, bazaar, and drugs now rule their thoughts and order their lives, and promotion in registration and in mortgages is the sovereign care of the officials in those branches. The drug-gist's is probably a safe and steady business the world over ; but in no country in the world can Moyenneville-en-Brie be equalled for the skill and ingenuity with which the " City of Paris " is conducted, the miraculous thrift and tireless, jealous, and adoring care with which the Père Baigne-dans-le-beurre tends his fields and his farm, and the conscientiousness and integrity, on tiny salaries and in walks of life which lead nowhere, of the Receiver in Registration and the Keeper of Mortgages. That is the social fact, by the side of the political ; the rock-like steadiness of French life compared with the rocket-like flashes of French politics. Even the volcanic South, in its latest upheavals, did not really disturb that solid social fact. The Midi wants only to sell its wine : it aims at no newer goal than that. The conservatism of its purpose, in fact, dismayed French Socialists. They barely concealed disdain for a country wedded to so low an ideal and so utterly estranged from high political theories, and could not overcome alarm at the discovery that they were held of so little account, not even the matter of a pitcher of rough wine, in the thoughts of the South. A wordy proclamation of the Unified Socialist party urged the South to renounce its fatal unionism—fatal to Socialism—



and to resort to "class war." Yet the South precisely has long returned Socialists and Socialist Radicals to Parliament. It is no paradox to argue that the "wine war" actually proved how steadily French life runs beneath the troubled surface of French politics. In much tragedy, the scene of burlesque was played by the deputies of the South, much against their will. Only one could venture down to his constituency; the others either retreated before volleys of vegetables and some stones, or remained safely away, content to telegraph messages from a distance. The Midi in health sends men to Parliament whose professed mission is to reform society; the Midi falls into a sickness—surely the ripe moment for regenerating the world, if you believe in your nostrum—and instead of trying the remedy, kicks out the physician for a quack. Never had politicians in France had such a blow. Freethinkers and Catholics and Protestants, Royalists and Bonapartists and Republicans, Conservatives and Socialists stood side by side in the South. The Midi in need drops politics; it wants only to sell its wine. It wants precisely to preserve the old order, not to try a new. M. Jaurès, proposing the "nationalization" of vineyards, raised a howl of laughter, and his own newspaper, *l'Humanité*, had to confess that Marcelin Albert was no Socialist. The troops which mutinied, mutinied not at all through anti-militarism, notwithstanding gleeful assertions of the General Labour Federation to the contrary, but through primitive allegiance to their soil and their kindred, an instinctive local patriotism. For years political France has fought in the air; the first real fight on firm earth since the Commune has been one in which the army of revolt refused even the alliance of any political party. There never was a better proof how weak Socialism is in French life.

Socialists in France have gone the right way about to

wrest power in French politics, but not to coax vitality for their cause from French life. Our Labour Parties have been social first and political afterwards ; French Socialism has been, and still is, political first and foremost. England began with Trade Unionism, France with Parliamentary Socialism ; there lies a radical difference. The French Socialist party in Parliament "unified" itself in the latter years of the 1902 chamber, and arrived "unified" in that of 1906, having ejected M. Millerand (thus a French forerunner of John Burns) because he had taken office under Waldeck-Rousseau, and retained by the skin of his teeth M. Jaurès, who had supported the Combes Cabinet. The party since the Dreyfus case multiplied tenfold its political power. Under the Dupuy administration it was a worrying wing, far from "unified," of the extreme left opposition. During M. Brisson's short Government it sank all social questions, and stood for the Republic. Under the Waldeck-Rousseau administration it was pledged, forsaking all theory, to the defence of the Republic. While M. Combes was in power it remained in allegiance, and M. Jaurès constantly "saved the Republic," though Socialism was already then beginning to fret and to threaten "unification." Socialism has "unified" itself, M. Jaurès has been bound down to the shibboleths of the party, no-compromise M. Guesde, not in the previous chamber, was returned at the General Election of 1906, and under the Clemenceau administration, after M. Sarrien's short-lived and colourless Cabinet—save for the colour which M. Clemenceau put in it—the party made a great show of independence. But the virtue, or the taint, of power remains. The Parliamentary Socialist party, now "unified," once helped, when it was a unit in the Republican defence party, to rule the Republic, and that it cannot forget. It has acquired for itself a comparatively new self-

confidence which must last, and in the country the reputation of a statesmanlike party which it has not lost. In a few years Socialism in French politics has passed from an eccentric and flying position to a central and stable standing. Has it made any corresponding gain in French life? The United Socialist party has won reputation with the individualist middle classes, but it has lost as much among the Socialists of the masses. It has won power, but the power has accrued to the political party, not to Socialism. It has conquered its political position, not because it was a Socialist party, but because it was a political party; not because it had Socialist ideals, but because it had political cleverness. The middle classes have learnt to admire its Parliamentary strategy and to respect the qualities of statesmanship which it showed while in league with the Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes Cabinets, but have learnt to ignore its Socialism. Having won power, it has imposed on all on whom power imposes. But the sort of power which it has won is precisely that which ought to defeat its own professed Socialist ideals. The Socialists, its constituents, presuming they were sincere, could not admire it for the power which others found admirable, and must become suspicious as others became trustful. Socialist working men believed in the Parliamentary Socialist party less as politicians believed in it more, and one can almost say that Socialism lost in the country what it gained in the political world.

From the Socialist point of view it seems likely that the return of a large party of members with Socialist or Socialist Radical labels by constituents who do not take Socialism seriously advances the cause less than the return of a smaller party by constituents who take Socialism in deadly earnest. A seat won for "Socialist Radicalism" in Moyenneville hardly means a gain for Socialism in the

country. Of course, the Socialist Labour vote also goes to the Socialist, or in default sometimes to the "Socialist Radical" candidate, as before, but it is given with cooling enthusiasm, and the days of fervent fellowship between the labouring man and the Labour Member seem to be over. The Socialist party "unified" itself with the idea of rekindling the old fires of faith in a Parliamentary phalanx pledged to regenerate the world. M. Jaurès challenged M. Clemenceau constantly for the same purpose, with an eye on the Socialist electorate. The party secedes from the Government majority still with the same end in view. But, in spite of all endeavours, little is achieved, and an original blunder mars everything: the breach between Parliamentary Socialism and Trade Unionism in France. The former is much older than the latter, and worked its way independently. Trade Unionism arose and grew also in independence. Neither honestly helped the other, and both mutually upbraided one another for their aloofness. The Parliamentary party, having got on very well without the syndicates, betrayed a disposition to go on doing without them, until it discovered one day lately that it could not. The Unions followed exactly the same line of thought, but have had no such rude awakening, for they are, on the contrary, still of a mind to dispense with the Parliamentary party. The latter is now running after them, and they make not one step towards a meeting. Distrust between Labour parties and Labour unions is old history in England also, but arises from almost exactly converse causes. In France the syndicates—which owe their legal existence to Waldeck-Rousseau's law of 1884, but were disabled from owning property of any kind by that same law—represent not vested rights, comparatively old traditions, strong and systematic organization, and the cast of mind which long-established social solidity gives, but, on the contrary, raw



and rough material, hasty and floating combination, irresponsibility, juvenile impulsiveness, and the temper of the man who has little to lose, and possibly much to gain, in any venture or adventure which the occasion may set before him. In fact, French Trade Unionism is peculiarly un-French, and has strangely few roots in the solid earth of French life; the very men who seem to think that no scheme is too wild for the policy of their syndicate certainly manage their own work and lives on far more business-like lines. Thus it is the Parliamentary party which has the traditions, the organized system, and the balance. But it has never troubled to bring up the Trade Unions the way they should go, and now they go their own gait, with the Parliamentary party, despairingly and against its better judgment, running after. The spectacle of M. Jaurès, leader for the present of the "Unified" Socialist party, panting in pursuit of the C.G.T. (the General Labour Federation), inwardly cursing it for putting on such pace, and outwardly making believe that it is not really going as fast as all that, at once fearing to be left behind, and dreading whither he is being taken, is quaint but undignified, with the severe M. Jules Guesde—who partly owing to illness has lately left the running, such as it is, to M. Jaurès, though a cordial detestation has long flourished between them—silently and sardonically looking on. The C.G.T., in which a sham union of thirty members may, for instance, have a vote, and another of twenty thousand have only another vote, does not represent French Trade Unionism fairly. But the Parliamentary Socialist party represents it still less, and the Unions, even when they distrust the C.G.T., appear to distrust the Parliamentary party quite as much. The latter for years attempted alternately to ignore or to "boss" them. The quarrel, for instance, over the contention upheld by the Parliamentary party that a



Labour Member should attend Trade Union congresses on a par with Union delegates, his constituency being considered equivalent to a Union, is an old one. Nowadays the Unions can be neither ignored nor controlled by the Parliamentary party, and it looks very much as though the latter were to be controlled by them. In all the recent Labour agitations the "Unified" Socialist party, in its turn, has been ignored. Everything has been done over its head, and it has been placed in a ridiculous position. Strikes came one after the other, and surprised Socialists in the Chamber as much as Conservatives. Yet the former in the House could not give themselves away, and were forced to feign perfect knowledge of all that was happening and about to happen, while inwardly wondering what on earth the C.G.T. would do next. They could not disapprove openly without betraying the absurdity of their own position, yet approval pledged them to action which they could not control, which already alarmed them, and the eventual possibilities of which alarmed them still more. Their predicament continues and seems like to continue. The C.G.T. enjoys itself thoroughly the while, and publicly derides the Parliamentary party. "General strikes," "Down with the army," "Turn your rifles against your officers, troopers," "Rip up the bourgeois, workers, and spike his machinery," "*Sabotage*," "direct action," and so on, are so many squibs thrown into the "Unified" Socialist party which make it jump, and possibly to the C.G.T. a distracted "Unified" Socialist party is a more thoroughly amusing sight than an alarmed bourgeoisie, which is not really so very deeply alarmed after all.

A noisier cracker than the rest is "anti-patriotism," invented by the delightful M. Gustave Hervé, podgy, jovial, generally on the broad grin, whom French Socialism and M. Jaurès, through fatal simplicity and almost childish

waywardness, the Governmental parties with some disingenuousness, and Reactionary politicians for their own far-reaching pet purposes, have done the invaluable service of taking seriously. French "Unified" Socialism, meeting in congress, passed, by a small majority, a resolution which in its concluding sentence pledged the party to oppose war by every means, "even unto a general strike of workers and insurrection." International Socialism in congress drew the line at mutiny in war time, and German leaders said they would fight for their country. French Socialism found itself in a quandary, and is still there. To war against war by desertion and mutiny is obviously a game at which two must play. "Unified" French Socialism has been landed in an absurdity by M. Jaurès running helter-skelter after M. Hervé, who is a nobody in the party. All the Reactionary political world is naturally delighted, the Government majority of Radicals and "Socialist Radicals" scores by the facile appeal of a profession of patriotism to the most patriotic nation in the world, and the cruellest cut of all is that the C.G.T. and the Trade Unions still look on sardonic and silent. It is hard indeed that even "anti-patriotism" should not have won over the C.G.T. M. Hervé, who has no responsibility, representing only himself, shouts; M. Jaurès, with amazing recklessness, shouts louder to the same tune; the very earth of France, compact of patriotism, is shocked; all opponents of Socialism rejoice, having won half a battle without a fight; the Government alliance with Socialism snaps, temporarily at least, over the plausible cause of patriotism; a gross blunder in political tactics is committed—and the C.G.T. still turns a deaf ear. It has not given a sign that it has heard M. Jaurès and not lifted a voice to applaud his latest cry. We shall be next having the C.G.T. turn patriot to spite M. Jaurès and the Parliamentary Socialist party.

It has been said already that the C.G.T. is not really what it is supposed to be—a genuine representative federation of Labour unions. But the question is what side the bulk of the Unions themselves will take when they have had enough of watching the game as at present. Whether it be not too late now for the “ Unified ” Socialist party to obtain a hold over Trade Unionism which was long left completely to itself, and the most enterprising leaders of which have been allowed to get completely out of hand, will be seen. But it seems likely that the Parliamentary Socialist party will in no other way be able to win power in the country. If it be relegated finally to the position of a mere political clique, Socialism in French life will be represented only by a small and explosive parcel of firebrands. These might or might not set light to Trade Unionism generally. Thus one may put it to opponents of Socialism, which they would prefer, an organized, statesmanlike, and businesslike working Socialism, which might be enlightened, but would still be Socialism, or a Socialism of mere fireworks, which might blow itself up, but might also blow other things up with it.

Explosions in France generally clear the way sooner or later for a strengthened fabric of authority and a yet more powerfully centralized Government, and that is the reason why the cue of French Reactionary political parties (only while in opposition, of course) always has been to feign violently that explosions are imminent. If explosions threatened now, the course of events would be plain. As it is, the future of Socialism in France is a much more complex and interesting problem. The national French character seems in some ways cut out to realize Socialism, and in others bred to stultify it. There is one form of Socialism to which ancient French political instinct seems to tend, but it is precisely one from which the best modern French

thought is averse. The promotion of a certain kind of Socialistic State, if undertaken, would be furthered naturally by some of the strongest and most solid elements in French life, but would then be opposed by many of its most enlightened and vital forces. On the other hand, the Socialism which these might work for would have against it the dead-weight of many deep national characteristics. There is, in fact, a rooted French political instinct which might easily make for a form of State Socialism, but at the same time a fresher growth of thought is perhaps all the more hostile to State Socialism, because of the affinity between the latter and the old *étatisme* of the French political system. The Frenchman's worship of the State is an ancient but still hardy survival. He barely understands himself what a naturally governable man he is, and how instinctively he craves to feel that he is part of a highly organized social order. When the wildest words are flying about, and the air is full of forebodings of anarchy and imprecations against upsetters of society, society still stands firm as a rock ; the anarchist himself in private life looks up to the State ; salvation from calamities overwhelming whole provinces is to come, not from the stricken people themselves, but from the State ; and the inner purpose of revolution is understood often to be merely the substitution of another State for the present. It is not many steps, then, from *étatisme* to State Socialism. The Russian autocracy, for instance, has long looked with a kindly eye upon State Socialism. Other things equal, the most solid elements of French life might be accommodated to a Socialistic State, and one can imagine the law-abiding French citizen rejoicing in his solidarity with such a State, his respectability as a part of it, and his significance as a factor of an all-owning and all-managing collectivist order of Society, by the time that had become the solidly established order. The obvious obstacle



is the vital instinct of proprietorship in the peasant who loves his land as much as his own flesh and blood ; in the salaried artisan who puts by to be a master, however humble, in his turn one day ; in the small shopkeeper who nurses a tiny business with almost passionate love and the unremitting care of three-quarters of a lifetime. But there is a higher and perhaps still stronger force against State Socialism. The present thinking generation in France has been through the cruder forms of Socialism and come out the other side. The political Socialist party is curiously and totally out of touch with intellectual France. It appears not to understand how its shibboleths were sifted by all thoughtful Frenchmen these many years, and how long ago the grain was separated from the chaff. It is a bad sign for " Unified " Socialism that it is estranged from the men who create the ideas of to-morrow. Among these will not be, as far as one can tell, the fetish of the State. A small set may be reviving sociology *à la* Hobbes, but the majority put the man first and society afterwards. No social revolution which might swamp the individual would escape the strenuous opposition of thinking Frenchmen. Intellectual anarchism, a few years ago, was an exaggeration of individualism. Nowadays, Socialism, if it became State Socialism, would certainly throw intellectual France into the arms of any opposing power, were it reactionary. Thinking Frenchmen have long ago accepted all that is liberal in Socialism, and would fight for that sifted and broadened Socialism. But they will not have *étatisme* still, under the name of Socialism, and they watch, rather hopelessly, the political Socialist party for signs of comprehension which do not appear.

Thus what Socialism by drifting into the narrow channel of State Socialism may gain from the support of the French instinctive attachment to a strong State, even grand-



motherly to the extent of a benevolent despotism, it will lose through the opposition of that French thought which calls *étatisme* the enemy, and would prefer mild anarchy to a benign tyranny. But, on the other hand, any free and broad form of Socialism which the modern minds might advocate would find arrayed against it all the solid traditional elements of French life in one hard block, the instinct of proprietorship with the instinct of orderliness, the deep social love for a strongly organized State with individual ambition and dogged self-interest. A Socialism resting on free combination of energies, on the association of common interests in small forces, and the larger grouping of these till the whole nation were embodied, any such Socialism, safeguarding Individualism, would be opposed by State Socialists as well as by anti-Socialists. Free combination would seem subversive to the State-worshipper, association of interests would appear quixotic to the intelligent self-seeker. Yet any such Socialism is the only form which the open modern mind can accept. The dilemma is interesting ; the easier way for Socialism is to State Socialism, but is not the harder the only right way ? It will be interesting to watch how in France Socialism will shape its course.

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#### *IV. England, France, and Socialism*

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THE Englishman who had been abroad found on returning that the British middle classes had "discovered" Socialism since the General Election of 1906. The Frenchman returning to his country after a rather longer absence would find that the bourgeoisie in the interval had been "discovering" Individualism. This no doubt is as it always is, and perhaps as it should be. The two peoples have often been called complementary of one another. In many ways they develop along reverse lines, and whither one is travelling thence the other hastens, both persuaded that they are on the road of progress, rightly, perhaps, as there is more than one road. When both halt, turn round, and look at each other, criticism on both sides is commonly and very naturally of the old mote-and-beam sort. Admirable advice is given to the British people by French critics, and every one knows how generously British opinion champions some French causes. Counsel and enthusiasm might often be just as useful at home, but at home "one sees things differently." The intelligent and informed foreigner can be a wonderfully acute judge; he may also be an illuminating encomiast. While he surprises us by finding fault with our pet foibles, he may delight by praising everyday virtues by which we set no store; he even reveals gold in our vices. Many Frenchmen admire John Bull precisely for that which in him annoys his critical sons, and English observers are constantly celebrating French characteristics which critical France is trying to get rid of. The variety of such inter-

national views is invaluable ; they may be often crooked, and no one could expect them to be always straight, but they are rarely dull.

England is not more surprised to find France discovering Individualism than is France to find England discovering Socialism. In fact, the two countries agreeably surprise each other. The rights of the individual are as old as the hills here and a burning topic there ; here the theory of Socialism is still a subject to talk about, there it is worn threadbare ; here an agrarian question exists, there a question exists how long district civil servants directly and solely answerable to the Home Office are to continue lawfully to wield judicial powers which are a negation of habeas corpus.

On the subject of Socialism, the Englishman in the street has latterly learnt a cheerful glibness, though a boy of twenty can easily remember when a Socialist with a vermilion tie was a lunatic, harmless if British to the backbone, dangerous if tainted with foreign ideas. Who fears to speak Socialism or meet Socialists now ? Of course, these, *ipso facto*, have ceased to belong to the smart set, but the man in the street is now familiar with them. Any one can hear him reasoning gently with them on the tops of motor 'buses, or hear them holding forth with all the freshness of neophytes. Nationalization of the soil, the unearned increment of capital, natural wealth versus artificial wealth, and so on, are all "in the air"—in the street air. They have even penetrated into the City man's suburban home, where ten years ago you might as well have put a bomb on the hearthrug as have thrown out some suggestions that labour alone produces wealth, or even some milder one than that. The thinking young generation is still jumping at the theory of Socialism with an eagerness which seems very fresh to any one who has lived latterly

abroad. One finds the subject still perfectly alive and wild in literary sets, the equivalents of which on the Continent have long since either killed and buried it, or stuffed and preserved it, or caged and tamed it. Of course, England has been in many ways, like M. Jourdain speaking prose, creating Socialism all the time without knowing it : a part of England has been creating it, perhaps more practically than other countries, and the rest of England did not know, or pretended not to know. Any Englishman among his acquaintance in the sturdy middle classes can point to a score of the sturdiest pillars on whom the 1906 General Election brought down a bolt from the blue, bringing down Socialism from the region of mad dreams to reality, wrong or right, but still a reality henceforth to be reckoned with.

There has been no such recent discovery in France. The Frenchman in the street, as a rule, long since either has walked in step with the army of Socialism or has tired of the crusade altogether, and smiles happily, or wearily jeers, when the host goes marching by him. The prosperous bourgeoisie either refuses to think of the cause otherwise than as of that of dangerous fanatics whose faith has long ago been proved absurd, and refuses to consider their arguments at all, or else has called and proclaimed itself Socialist these ten years, usually for politic reasons. The "aristocracy of the intellect" has for twenty years past turned the subject over and over unto weariness and scepticism. The old "Ivory Tower" of the poet, seer, mystic, and egoist has crumbled, and left its denizens standing open to the modern world. But the old castle in the air of the altruist, reformer, and regenerator has large rents in its vaporous sides too. Either a great scepticism or a great mellowness has come over the *jeunesse pensante*, which looks all round Socialism and other things. The *jeunes* "are all Socialists now," of course, but none are

“ Unified ” Socialists of the Parliamentary party. Socialism may have gained by losing good intellectual haters, but also has lost fervent intellectual enthusiasms.

Enthusiasm, in fact, goes more to individualism. The “ cult of the ego ” has died, but not the cultivation of personality. The old conflict between the person and the State is still acute, and if the Socialism of the future is to absorb the individual, thinking young France will fight it. The contradiction in that enlightened Socialism which aims at levelling and at raising, at subjecting the one man to the many, and yet at exalting the one man, disturbs minds. Reconciling contradictories would be no new thing, and might be a mere matter of one more nice adjustment of social forces, but it would be nice to a hair’s breadth in that Socialism of the future. At all hazards, State Socialism is condemned, unless the individual is to perish, and with State Socialism modern philosophizing France will have nothing to do on any account. It has come to that definite conclusion, at any rate, after many years of wondering.

The middle classes have reached the same conclusion, after less meditation, through practical experience. The French people in the main is opposed to State Socialism, knowing what *étatisme* means. In England, the average man’s idea of Socialism is State Socialism, and if he has any leanings towards Socialism he will not object to giving State Socialism a trial, as has been done already by now. Many to whom one mentions Socialism quote instantly municipal undertakings, as though these were the be-all and end-all of it, and to them the antithesis of Socialism is non-interference of the State. The fact is, that with us the State had so long learnt non-interference as to drive reformers appealing to its arms. The French State has never learnt non-interference, and France’s best Governments have been the most grandmotherly. The people’s instinc-



tive yearning for tutelage still remains, and "functionarism" is as rampant as ever. But the best business men of the country are learning independence and enterprise, and are becoming fractious children under an over-centralized Government which controls them at every turn, all for their good. They are looking more and more to England for lessons in self-defence and self-advancement. The British business instinct, which it is something of a fashion to cry down in England, is constantly cracked up in France. Thus prosperous and enterprising France is an enemy of State Socialism, whereas business Englishmen could do, or think they could do, with, at all events, a few mild instalments of it. Busy France is in the same regard distrustful of Socialism in general, while it has, to a great extent, called itself Socialist these ten years. Instalments are accepted because Labour clearly insists upon them; but the middle classes, even when advertising their adherence to Socialism, are preoccupied with the need of safeguarding individualism. The French governing mind will always be ready enough to govern in and out of season; it will be only too ready to adopt principles of benevolent despotism and to allow freedom to take care of itself. The enterprising leaders of the bourgeoisie feel that theirs must be the reverse function. State Socialism may succeed only too easily in France; their care must be for that safeguarding of the individual at which an enlightened Socialism, if Socialism there is to be, must simultaneously aim. In this way is the French bourgeoisie "discovering" individualism.

In Parliamentary life, French and English Labour parties, or Socialist parties—to use the everyday English and French terms, which are practically equivalent—are travelling in opposite directions for the present. The most obvious difference is superficial and passing. Union on one side and division on the other are due to difference of age

in Parliamentary political existence. The old English political parties, of course, began long ago splitting up; the French Parliament did long ago split up. But the Labour movements in both countries are doing exactly the reverse. If French Socialism is now "unified," it was for years divided into factions. Unlike most of the other political parties in France, it has in its evolution not forgotten but learnt party discipline. But it began by scorning discipline on principle, and the various English Labour parties have apparently made the same beginning. Barring accidents, the evolution will continue logically. It is not a rash forecast to imagine that, while the historic English parties go on splitting up, the present Labour factions will in their turn reach the stage at which "unified" Socialism has arrived across the Channel. Possibly then the other *disjecta membra* of Liberals and Conservatives will be "unified" also; even the City man foresees a day when there will be only two parties left at Westminster, the unified Socialists and the unified anti-Socialists, for and against Labour as one side will put it, against and for Society as the other will. The bourgeois of Paris has long since mused on the coming of such a day in his country, though accidental and passing cares have often diverted his meditations in the interval.

The contrast between the "unified" state of Socialism in France and the multiplicity of more or less antagonistic Labour parties in England is a difference, not of kind, but of degree, in evolution. There is a deeper difference in present policy. With boyish assertiveness English Socialism, young in Parliamentary life, is agog for independence. It yearns to stand alone and burns to prove as often as possible that it is a real independent party, having no connection with the old political forces, and able to walk and talk and vote by itself. But the one great fact in the otherwise almost uneventful history of French Socialism during the past few

years has precisely been its alliance with "Bourgeoisism." One incident has its almost exact counterpart in England. M. Millerand, then a Socialist, took office as Home Secretary in the Waldeck-Rousseau Cabinet, in which the Minister of War was General the Marquis de Galliffet, who fought against the Commune. M. Millerand, having been solemnly excommunicated by the Socialist party, cheerily turned moderate Republican, and one might now call him a sort of Whig. Mr. John Burns, still in the early Millerand stage of evolution, has already been slanged. But with this incident the likeness between the present Parliamentary positions of the parties in the two countries ends. The same incident has occurred in divergent developments. French Socialism has been "unified," well and good, but it has not unified itself away from contact with "Bourgeoisism," and what the purists of the party call the stain remains. The Waldeck-Rousseau Government was the time of open and unblushing alliance with "Capitalist" parties. M. Jules Guesde, the prophet, was then out of the Chamber, but lifted an awful voice now and then in the country. After the Millerand excommunication M. Jaurès continued more gingerly the alliance. Suspected of Millerandism—and no one knowing him doubts that, other things being equal, if he were offered office in a sufficiently Radical Cabinet, he would perceive no danger to Socialism in his acceptance—he narrowly escaped excommunication in his turn, saved himself with a *mea culpa*, and was "unified," only a few minor men besides M. Millerand, then far outside the pale, being refused "unification." (All French politicians, and the most advanced in particular, lack a sense of language and rejoice in a spurious coinage of words.) But the stain remains on M. Jaurès himself and on the party. He made a sudden effort which betrayed haste to take up his stand as an unsoiled prophet and uncom-

promising theorist of Socialism, in a great speech which was deplorably crude in parts. The effort proved only that he can never be anything but a practical politician. The great fact of the recent history of French Socialism precisely is that by joining the Bloc of Republicans against the adversaries of the Republic it descended to practical politics. Its influence upon the country at large was almost doubled thereby. Having "unified" itself, it advertised itself ostentatiously in the new Chamber, no longer as a wing of the Bloc, but as an independent Bloc. But once a practical politician, always a practical politician; power and effectual influence in the government of a country once tasted, the taste will not be lost. French Socialism may "unify" itself as much as it likes, it cannot forget that when it was of the Bloc it was such a vital force among the ruling forces of the nation as it never had been before. Its high dream of distant regeneration will always be tainted by recollection of the time when it was a power of the day, not a possible power of some day; one can also say that its utopianism will henceforth be corrected by an element of practical sense. "Pure" Socialism across the Channel is tainted.

Our Socialists, though still much variegated, are, as is easy to see, slowly growing purer and purer; they are still obviously far from a "unified" state, but that is the ideal at which all their purest leaders aim. These, as jealously as possible, guard against every fleck of "capitalist" influence, in the House and at the polls. Thus it can be seen how the two countries play at cross purposes in Socialism as in some other things. The English Labour movement looks to the continental countries, and particularly to France, in many respects as to the advance guards of Socialism in the world. It is usual to hear contrasts drawn between the solid phalanx of the party in the French Chamber, a power in Parliament, already with a



history at its back, and the young beginnings of groups at Westminster, and these look up to that. But you find that very "unified" party in France looking up in the same degree, though for other reasons, to the English Labour movement. In fact, French Socialism is, not altogether consciously, busy learning from England much that our Labour parties are busy unlearning, and vice versa. The Mother of Parliaments is still revered abroad, even by those to whom a Parliament is a bourgeois institution. French "unified" Socialism is now not only completely at peace with Parliamentaryism to all practical intent, but fast learning to enjoy the game of Parliamentary tactics and to play it with skill. The day was when at international Socialist congresses half the representatives of France were dogmatically and violently opposed to the Parliamentary system, and carried principle into practice by paralyzing discussion, to the horror and anger of punctilious English chairmen and English delegates well drilled in the discipline of public meetings. That was at a time when the Labour Party at Westminster was a handful which ultimately dwindled to one member. Now "unified" French Socialism is an official Parliamentary party; English Labour members sit in numbers at Westminster, but desire it to be understood that they are in the capitalist Parliament but not of it. On the contrary, in France, "unification," a stroke of genius, has handicapped the movement against Parliamentary representation. The "unified" party is pledged to representation; opponents of the latter are reduced to being free lances. The "unified" party has learnt the power of Parliamentary action and the practical use of Parliamentary discipline, and having tasted government, likes it; and all that it has learnt from England. English Labour parties, trained for Parliament from infancy, like all public groups of Englishmen, aim at the independence



and solidarity of French "unified" Socialism, and look up to it precisely as to the State of the future, standing by itself and untrammelled in the "capitalist" State of the present.

Each people looks on the other with fresh eyes. The English Labour member envies France her "unified" Socialism; the French Socialist envies England her Trade Unionism. The old distinction between theoretical France and practical England is always true with qualifications, and is substantially true of the Labour movement in both countries. Trade Unionism with us is leading, or has led, to Socialism; French Socialism is developing "Syndicalism," i.e. Trade Unionism. The very words picture the contrast, as do those of "unified" Socialism and Labour. French Trade Unionism is in its infancy compared with the historic English movement. It makes much noise, but has relatively no money; it could not dream of sending members to Parliament and paying them even a pound a week; it has since recent laws an official status, but it has not yet a universally acknowledged standing in the country; it has outbursts of revolutionary effervescence unknown in England, and has carried incursions into regions forbidden by national prudence and State reasons; but among the nation and against national customs it still struggles where British Trade Unionism has long since conquered; its present conflicts with employers read like past episodes of English social history; it fights still over questions which British Trade Unions long since settled, and now treat with the solemn authority of official bodies; it has small hold over the labouring classes themselves, which often either fight shy or wax sceptical. In France "unified" Socialism is the parent, and Trade Unionism a wayward offspring, wayward because young and still weakly. This condition of things works out into curious results. In English Labour,

Trade Unionism stands for the staidest and soberest element, often is the drag on the wheel, and sometimes the very bar blocking the way for Socialistic doctrine. Such a position is unthinkable in France, where the Parliamentary Socialist Party has the weight, and Syndicalism drags it ahead if it can. French Labour organized earlier to send deputies to the Chamber than to assert its own immediately practical interests, and a result has been that Socialist opposition to Parliamentary representation, though it has somewhat died down, survives chiefly among the Syndicates, the same opposition when it exists in English Trade Unions being due to exactly contrary reasons. When a British union holds aloof from the Labour Representation Committee, it does so through a national conservatism ; it is an old-established institution, with vested interests, and compared with it the Labour Representation Committee is something of an upstart. French Syndicates, for whom vested interests are possessions hitherto undreamt of, chafe at omnipotent "unified" Socialism, and would ever be rushing ahead, because, not having the weight to drag, they can act effectually only by careering on. The *Confédération Générale du Travail* is merely a federation of Trade Unions ; call it that, and it has a harmless, respectable, almost bourgeois air ; but in France the bourgeoisie looks upon it as a wild anarchist host, and the federation itself rejoices in fostering the idea.

French Labour, with a "unified" Socialist party over seventy strong in the Chamber, besides Independent Socialists, is still clamouring for rights or privileges many of which have been granted years ago in "Conservative" England. To this day open-air meetings are forbidden, and public opinion on the whole approves of their being dispersed instantly by armed force. I have seen three workmen knocked down and carried kicking away by the Paris police

on the deserted Place de la Concorde because some strike committee had announced a meeting there. In the coal-mining districts of Northern France one heard for years at strike times mystic and childish chants of "Bou, bou, bou yè yè!" The explanation was that "Vive la grève!" until a few years ago was a "seditious" cry, rendering the utterer liable to some six months' imprisonment, so the men translated the words into a gibberish of their own invention. Now "Vive, vive, vive la grève!" is tolerated, while dragoons, hussars, and mounted gendarmes look grimly on, pouncing every few moments on *rassemblements* of three or four men arm-in-arm, "dispersing" them, and running them in if they "commit rebellion," which they always do. The argument of "strong" French Governments is that French Labour has not learnt responsibility in freedom, and it certainly has not; but it never has had the chance of learning. Kept under the gendarme's eye, the striker has one idea—to throw a brickbat when the eye is not looking. The right to strike at all has only recently been acknowledged and is still contested by the majority of employers, though they accept it *de facto* when they cannot help themselves. Any organization of wage-earners at all is still opposed tooth-and-nail by a large section of the French middle classes, which take the view that Trade Unionism makes, not for responsible association, but for irresponsible agitation; and the more the view prevails, the more it will be justified: the more the Syndicates are denounced as revolutionary, the more revolutionary they will become. Picketing is illegal in France, and "persuasion" is almost invariably considered by the courts as an "infringement of the right to work." The result is that strikers, knowing that in spreading a strike it is ten to one on their breaking the law, break it deliberately, and smash blacklegs' cottages. Finally, there never has been a "Taff

Vale decision " question across the Channel, for the simple reason that no French Trade Union ever had power enough to inflict any lasting damage on a trade, or has ever possessed by a long way capital enough to be held usefully liable. This in a country where "unified" Socialism is a power in Parliament. French Labour looks up in awe to British Trade Unions as to powers in the land.

French Labour has little more to gain by theorizing, but much by practice. A vague and crude "Collectivism" has many adepts; the rights of Labour are fewer than in England. In the future, French Socialism will by a curious anomaly be supported by the country in practice and opposed in theory. It is only apparently paradoxical to say that French Socialism will be popular inasmuch as it makes for individualism. In any struggle for such conquests as the right of meeting, it will gradually gain the support of a great part of the nation, as now popular sympathy, in opposition to many employers, maintains the right to strike. In any attempt to narrow, instead of broadening, social life, and to tighten the grip of the State in the name of the social weal, it will have the nation against it. Circumstances which could arise only in France gave Socialists these latter years a part to play, and one stroke of active policy did more for them in the country than much propaganda. Their alliance with the Bloc of the Republicans against the "White" Revolutionists, from Royalists of a Jacobite turn of mind to mere adventurers, and all more or less under the rule of Clericalism, the bugbear of France, proved them public-spirited and ready to join with the hated bourgeois for the sake of their common freedom; proved them practical as well as Utopian, individualists as well as Socialists. The bourgeoisie has looked upon them with human sympathy ever since. One cannot suppose that English Socialism will ever have a

similar part to play. It has its own stalking-horses in lieu of the "defence of the Republic," and of a totally different breed—the questions of the unemployed and of the *latifundia* of England, the first of which has not for the present, and the second of which cannot have, any counterpart in France. These special British problems give to British Socialism a particular twist of its own, and here comparison is impossible. But our Labour may yet have something to learn from Socialism in France. The French bourgeoisie has "discovered" individualism; our individualism can for the present be left to itself. But France has learnt already to foresee that any "pure" Socialist State which may ever come about will have to rediscover the individual.



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## V. *Strikes and Alarums*

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THE neat and prosperous elderly gentleman, with the rosette of the Legion of Honour in his button-hole, reading peacefully, at a café "terrace," the latest and most furious article in *Social War* of M. Gustave Hervé, the bloodthirsty opponent of all wars save civil war ; two fierce-looking policemen standing by to protect the café against any anæmic and weakly waiter on strike who might attempt picketing all by himself ; dragoons riding up and down every half hour looking for invisible rebels ; papa, on Sunday afternoon, between his *dame* and their *demoiselle*, standing to read in a vermillion bill on a hoarding of the Avenue de l'Opéra that the Government has prostituted the Republic under the foul yoke of a bloody despotism ; the plump little major in uniform learning, over his absinthe, from the café's *Figaro* that France will next week at latest be eaten up by the dragon of anarchy unless a Perseus of a Dictator come before to save her ; the dreadful Bousquet of the Confédération Générale du Travail (afterwards arrested) marshalling his men imperiously at the word of command and destroying M. Lépine's occupation by keeping a martinet's order among the strikers while the Prefect and his police stood feverishly by, fidgeting to re-establish it by "dislocating" demonstrations ; Delalé, the bootmaking orator of the C.G.T., refusing to go with the police when the warrant was brought to him, as well as to Bousquet and Lévy (also of the C.G.T.), until he had finished to his liking a pair of boots for a customer, doubtless a bourgeois : all these give us

characteristic pictures of France seething with revolution. The neat elderly gentleman will tell you so if you ask him. He points out to begin with that under the state of things which the Government has brought about, partly through criminal complicity and partly through abject cowardice, he, a citizen of repute, cannot take his appetizer in peace at his own customary café unless shielded by a strong force of police and military. Look at the Mounted Republican Guards riding past ; they are there because, were they not, heaven knows what might not happen to him, an honest citizen of some substance, sitting at his café. Is this a normal and orderly condition of society ? He is a moderate and liberal man ; but when it comes to unbridled anarchy terrorizing society, and red rampant revolutionism tyrannizing over honest folk, then he draws the line, then he protests, and calls for ruthless repression. A pale waiter, disguised as a man about town in a morning coat finished off by his professional broadcloth trousers, enters the café and whispers to a blackleg serving. A flash of fury runs round the place. Out with him. Manager, assistant-manager, head waiter, blacklegs and customers hurl themselves against the dangerous man and throw him out, head foremost, hitting the swing door before he lands sprawling on the pavement, whence the two policemen gather him up and carry him off to be charged with " intimidation and rebellion." The neat, elderly gentleman is triumphant ; his case is proved. If France were ruled by a Government with any shadow of strength in its marrow, would such scandalous scenes be allowed, and would dangerous Anarchists, probably armed with daggers for all you know, thus penetrate murderously into peaceful cafés to threaten respectable customers and intimidate honest workers ? The hydra of anarchy has thriven on the guilty weakness of the State ; it must be not scotched but killed, or France

is doomed. The fat little major might cry "hear, hear," if he were not in uniform. But you will find the neat elderly gentleman echoed crescendo any number of times in drawing-rooms as well as in cafés.

Contradiction is impossible, and it is really dangerous to suggest that the country is not going to the dogs ; you would be hounded out of the room yourself instantly. Comfortable elderly ladies, old men and young, charming ladies dressed marvellously, all are violently certain after a perfect dinner that the country is doomed. Hearth and home, family and property, religion, morality and money, have fled. We dined, it seems, in terror of the revolution knocking at the door, pike in hand ; we are taking liqueurs while we may, for who knows what to-morrow will bring ? The nation is honeycombed with anarchy, and the C.G.T. rules a cowed Government. A dictator might save France if he came instantly and were ruthless enough. No pity, no quarter, no "sickly sentiment" for criminals sapping order to blow up honest folk. A year of good, wholesome martial law applied at once might save the country. Have you heard Salomé ? and in little screams of the ladies' delight over the shudders and wails of the orchestra while John the Baptist's head is being cut off down below in the pit, the plight of France is forgotten. But in another part of the room one "who knows" tells how Fallières has filled his pockets with the spoils from altars and sacred treasures.

"Down with the Republic ! If the old Royalist parties had any marrow in their bones, they might sweep away the Republican clique and not one of us would raise a finger for it, so loathsome has it become to a great part of the working classes, the peasantry and small functionaries." "There never was a Government so despicable as the syndicate of greed, conceit and ambition which is in power under the

trading name of Clemenceau and Co." "Clemenceau has fallen into a sad decrepitude. His clowning is turning not only to softening of the brain, but to delirium tremens. All symptoms show that he is ripe for a madhouse." "Hear, hear," cry fashionable drawing-rooms, till they find that the speakers are precisely their enemies. Of the three quotations above, the two first are taken from M. Gustave Hervé, in the *Guerre Sociale*, and the third from the *Voix du Peuple*, the paper of the C.G.T. They might just as well have come from politicians of the smart set yearning for a dictator. On both sides the politic is a politic of frenzied imagination, and both have equally lost the sense of language. Extremists have no idea left of the meaning of words, and politicians who stand between them have not much more. Orators of the C.T.G. talk of "cutting button-holes in the bellies of the bourgeois," a strange metaphor, and of pouring vitriol into cough mixture, kneading pounded glass into the bread, tampering with steam-engines to produce explosions, and so on, the latter processes being generally called *sabotage*. The bourgeois is thrilled, but otherwise words bring no result in facts, luckily. The cooks on strike went lyrically mad: "Warm breezes gave nature the signal of re-awakening, with the rising sap our energies increase, with the buds bursting from the powerless bark our impulsion lifts the winterly tombstone, with the flowers blooming balmily freedom salutes our pestiferous graves." Delicious cooks! we love them. The manifesto goes on to say that like the budding leaf and the rising sap, the cooks yearn to assert themselves. They will rise from their graves where it appears they lie, and which for an unexplained reason are pestiferous. What does it all mean? That the honest cooks are infected by bad literature, and that the C.G.T.'s cutting of buttonholes in the bellies of the bourgeois is of a piece with the bursting of the

buds and the lifting of winterly tombstones. It is all an incontinence of words.

A manifesto of the Unified Socialist party said on the eighth of May, 1907: "Paris is in a state of siege, under the heel of an audacious and cynical police," and the party of law and order cries in the *Figaro*: "The moral and material crisis which we are passing through reveals to the least clear-sighted eyes the abyss which our country is daily nearing," describes the law allowing associations as having been transformed into a "blackmailing and terrorizing law," and calls for "the mysterious tamer who already haunts the dreams or the nightmares of millions of anxious minds," and the "strong man who will bring us back authority"; the C.G.T. "pursues as its object the destruction of the *régime bourgeois* and the advent of communism," whereas every good Frenchman, according to a Corsican Bonapartist gentleman, M. Leandri, must join his "League of Social Defence," formed on account of the apparent signs of "the supreme and imminent catastrophies," to take arms against the "rising tide of anarchy," to "recreate the mentality of the country," to establish in Paris and the Provinces "centres of resistance and combat" and "counter-revolutionary sections in every Paris ward," to "answer violence with violence, war with war," and lastly to prove that "at the hour of the supreme *mêlée* . . . the hostages who will be stood to the wall and shot down will not be those you think they will be." Congratulations to M. Leandri. This is as good stuff of its kind as the metaphoric buttonholes in bourgeois bellies of the C.G.T. It is all blood and thunder on both sides. The amazing thing is how gentle and peacefully the country goes on living all the same. If words were facts all political France would have exterminated itself long ago, like the warriors who sprang from the dragon's teeth. But all



Labour Day afternoon, the middle class Frenchman with a small, quiet business, who is innumerable, played dominoes or the mysterious game of cards called "Manille," and looked through the café window at the Dragoons. During the waiters' strike he sat at his café and peacefully read that his country either was the prey of anarchy or lay writhing under the heel of tyranny, according to his newspaper. During the bakers' strike, fresh bread never missed even on a single Sunday morning, or Paris would have thought the promised end had come. Through it all, Paris lives, like Siéyès, but it is not a Terror, except of words. I often wonder how, when the social revolution does come, France will find words in which to write about it ; all her strongest are already used up. When, if ever, the French workman, who, if unskilled, works harder, for longer hours and less pay than any of ours, and is far less strongly associated with his fellows, does turn resolutely to revolution, and when the skilled French artisan, in many crafts more skilled, better paid on the whole than ours, and more of a man of substance—with a small pile at the bank—also decides for social war, if ever his keen mind see a profitable way thereby, what will those who cried "Wolf!" find to cry? Observers who live in France, and many who follow French affairs from England, are daily told that revolutionism has riddled France. The revolution might come and France be so weary of hearing about it for years that she might let it come.

The C.G.T., a federation of Trade Unions, formed on January 1st, 1903, is accepted popularly as the spark which will set the country afire with the social revolution. Its objects include the abolition of the wage-earning and wage-paying classes—how is not stated. Its tactics include "direct action," boycotting and *sabotage*, and general strikes. It includes about 3000 unions nominally, but

probably can command effectually only a far smaller number. Its income from subscriptions during the two years ending June, 1906, amounted to £2406, plus £1504 which went to the strike fund. A total average annual income of £1955 seems hardly enough for financing the great social revolution.

I have already explained how the Trade Union movement in France has been delayed, how it has grown slowly, opposed by public opinion, how, far from promoting Parliamentary Socialism, it has followed it, how it has not even been supported, but has been secretly withstood, by the Socialist Party in Parliament, and how, being confirmed neither heartily by public opinion nor ungrudgingly by the State nor generously by Parliamentary Socialism, it has been naturally driven to extremism. The C.G.T. is a natural product of French trade union evolution. If it did not talk revolution it would be ignored. It keeps itself before the public mind merely by inflated rhetoric because it has little real substance, in fact, to fall back upon if it gave up talking. French Trade Unionism is incomparably less powerful than ours, its funds are absurdly small, its hold on the workers is weak, its standing with the State, with employers and with public opinion is still uncertain, and it is looked upon very generally as a natural enemy by the parties of law and order. Open air meeting is of course completely illegal and has never on one single occasion been tolerated. Private meetings in closed buildings are watched by detectives in plain clothes, and speakers are subsequently indicted for their speeches. An absolutely centralized Government has instantaneous means of control through its prefects, sub-prefects and thousands of minor nominees, directly appointed by the Home Office, over the entire country, such as are unknown in England, and an immense standing army in which disaffection among the men even

in the hardest trials is almost unknown. France, Frenchmen tell us, is riddled with anarchy ; it is the most strongly organized country, from the head downwards, in the world. What counts even more than the organism of Government is the instinct of the people. It is strictly true that the prosperous and successful French workman still fights shy of combination with his fellows. "Syndicalism" has a bad odour with the "respectable" artisan. He has still a lurking suspicion that union is a revolutionary method, and the law which made it legal over twenty years ago has not made it reputable. Everyone who has talked to his baker, his butcher, his carpenter, his café waiter, in Paris, knows the familiar answer that "a man must have nothing to do but belong to a syndicate," or at best that "syndicates are good enough for the young fellows who have no wives and children." The reply is always partly meant to please you, for no French workman who comes into contact with the bourgeois can imagine him ever to be favourable to Trade Unions, and half the time, even if the worker be a Union man, he will not "let on" to the man who wears a black coat and is supposed to bear a bourgeois heart beating beneath it. Often the worker is a bourgeois at heart too, and suspicious of changes. It is not the attitude of that Englishman who is content to "know his betters when he sees them," and who shuns Unions because he depends directly and personally upon an employer. It is a natural and ingrained respect, not so much of persons and personal authority as of the impersonal and abstract order of society. The French artisan who has got on in the world feels deeply that he is part of that order, a link in the chain ; his one shame would be to fall out and to know that he was no longer a wheel in the machine, but out of it all, an outcast, a pariah having no longer a "social position." The landlord of a tiny wineshop, every Parisian concierge, the official who

sweeps the streets, the waiter who has served years in one café, the lady who has sold newspapers in the same kiosk for a decade, all ground their obscure and subconscious philosophy of life on the deep knowledge that they have a "social position." The fierce men of the C.G.T., who talk fire and brimstone at the Labour Exchange, have usually in their heart of heart the same conviction. Do you suppose that Bousquet or Lévy of the C.G.T., indicted for seditious utterances, or Delalé the bootmaker, against whom no bill was found, or any other of these upsetters of society and plotters of the great revolution, ever forget to pay their rent and tip their concierge? You may do almost anything in France—outside Bohemia, which is a very small province—rather than not pay the rent on quarter day and tip the concierge on the *Jour de l'an*. None of these fierce Revolutionists are one whit Bohemian. They are bourgeois at home, put so much by daily for the rent, pay their tradesmen's bills cash down, balance their domestic budgets weekly, and occupy a solid "social position." They have the instinct like the rest. I should not be surprised to find that the Parisians who do live from hand to mouth are chiefly Bonapartists, yearning for a "dictator." French Revolutionists and Anarchists arrange their lives more methodically than most British workmen ever have done, practical though the latter be in politics. If it be true that we must go to men's real lives, not to the outward show they make of them, for the key to their own actual meaning in the world, it surely is significant that this or the other fierce foe of property pays his rent with deadly regularity. I can never forget Delalé keeping the police, come to arrest him, waiting while he finished conscientiously a pair of boots for an infamous bourgeois. He is an illuminating symbol. And drawing-rooms talk of France putrid with the rot of disaffection,



when this social instinct permeates the nation more strongly than any other. No man more than a Frenchman feels his liability to society and his solidarity with society. We are not half such social animals as the French.

Never did such a pothole on the surface disturb so little the still waters beneath ; never have strikes and alarums made so much noise in a nation and so little ruffled the real national life. One watches with amazement smart Paris amusing itself furiously, hard-working Paris working hard and apparently always finding work, the middle classes at their business with perpetual thrift and care, the peasantry clinging as closely and as tightly as ever to their beloved soil, in the midst of all this storm of speeches and writings from a fiery Revolutionism and a savage Reaction. Yet it seems impossible that the storm should remain for ever superficial. Politicians on one side calling for a despot to behead Socialism, and on the other for a Revolution to rip up the bourgeoisie, cannot for ever rant in a wilderness. They must get a hearing some day ; it does not appear that the rulers of the country are going the right way about to discredit them. The proposal to break up forcibly the C.G.T., which no one can deny to be a perfectly legal organization, was one of the strangest errors of statesmanship, fortunately renounced just in time by M. Clemenceau, under pressure from MM. Viviani and Briand, then his Socialist colleagues, whom the "Unified" Socialist party is always busy cursing. But the prosecutions of C.G.T. leaders for seditious utterances at private meetings may end as disastrously as prosecutions against vague and obscure plotters on the charge of conspiracy against the safety of the State. The State in France, more strongly armed than most others, is perpetually anxious, or feigning to be anxious, for its safety. The timid middle classes are unfortunately inclined to the same anxiety for the safety of



the State. One wonders whether, if the State left the people alone, and the people left the State alone, the experiment would not answer well for all concerned. Combination has always been opposed for State reasons, openly or secretly. The result has been the C.G.T. The C.G.T. is undoubtedly a nuisance, but whose is the original sin? What party in France has ever favoured rational and business-like organization among workers? The propertied classes opposed it strenuously, gave the right grudgingly, and resent its being used. Governments long looked upon all associations as revolutionary, and cannot make up their minds not to keep either a grandmotherly or stepmotherly eye upon all common action of citizens. The Socialist party in Parliament has always played a double game with Trade Unionism in France, and is still at it. The party ignored the Trade Unions, its juniors, until it could not help recognizing them, and then it tried to patronize them. Now it is violently distraught—and may split—over the dilemma whether to take bodily the lead of “*Syndicalism*,” assuming all the responsibilities which that implies, or to break with it. M. Jaurès, as usual, frantically tries to reconcile contradictories. But when the Socialist party endeavours to take the lead of the C.G.T., which, having been completely ignored, has gone its own gait and got out of hand, the leaders find themselves led, none knows whither. On the other hand, a break with the C.G.T. may, for all the Parliamentary Socialist party knows, mean a break with Trade Unionism altogether, and then the party may find itself between two stools. The dilemma is a pretty one, but awkward. The fatal mistake has been to ignore Trade Unionism, which may result in “*Syndicalism*” ignoring all else. For there were, and there are, admirable materials even in the C.G.T. It has organized itself with spirit, with enterprise, and with intelligence. It talks too

much, but that is a safety valve—for the present. On the marvellously solid foundation of French society combination could, and can, be grounded with fine results. Take the spirit, even the purple eloquence, of the C.G.T., mix it judiciously with the individual intelligence, the strong social instinct, and the solidity of the French artisan, and the compound will be worth having. But if France continues talking of violent remedies, they will at last be wanted. The savage cure will bring on the disease. There is the making of great things in French “Syndicalism,” but also possibly of dire things.

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## VI. *The Symbolism of M. Fallières*

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I WAS just back home in Paris from the Presidential elections of February 18, 1899, at Versailles, when a French friend, who was one of the *jeunes* of those days, and whom "politics disgusted" a fortnight before, burst in shouting "Live the Republic!" and we shook hands. A French cavalry officer who was in the room at the time looked sour. I said nothing about my having just seen M. Loubet drive away from Versailles palace to the railway station in a shower of stones and mud and a storm of "Mort à Loubet!" "Panamiste!" "Mort aux juifs!" from a flying column of patriotic cyclists riding as hard as they could after his carriage. The officer might have chuckled, and the *jeune* who had suddenly sloughed the "cult of the ego" and appeared as a friend of public liberty, might have called him out there and then. Those were stirring days. January 17, 1906, seemed tame indeed by comparison. No *jeunes* cried "Live the Republic!" and the Republic did not even pretend that she required saving. There were no stones in the air, the mud was left to lie peacefully on the pavement, and no one shouted death to anybody. The nearest approach to cries of "Mort!" consisted of a few of "Vive Doumer!" In the sloppy streets and under the iron-grey sky ninety-nine persons out of a hundred called "Vive Fallières!" It was a dull day, and all of M. Loubet's doing. He must have smiled to himself as he sat in the Élysée before the telephone which had just told him the result of the election. Only six years and eleven months: it was a short time for

such a falling off from storm and stress to ditchwater dullness, from emotion to equanimity, from the excitement of adventure to hopeless common sense. It certainly was all, or nearly all, M. Loubet's doing. At any rate he "lived through it," and that is saying a great deal. There is a legend, naturally fabricated, that on reaching the palace of the Élysée from Versailles on the day of his election, M. Loubet said, "I come in here like a whipped dog." Of course, he said nothing of the kind, but the point is that such a saying could be invented and believed. The excitement did not at all end with the throwing of stones at Versailles. Mud was flung, metaphorically, for months. I remember papers being cried in the streets of Paris for about a year, containing the full history, with or without pictures, of "Panama Premier's" shameful life, from infancy upwards, almost comparable with that of Tiberius Cæsar. One line out of the hundreds of thousands written in the style would have sufficed in Germany to ensure the conviction of the author, publisher, printer, and vendor for Majestäts-Beleidigung. M. Loubet's Presidency will always be remembered as supplying fine arguments for freedom, and there never was such a case of imperturbable "living it down." Perhaps there was a dash of heroism, too, in the example, when one comes to think of it. In the storm and stress the one calm place was the Élysée, and "Papa Loubet" came up smiling every time in public. In private he set his teeth and told himself "I will win"—and he did. That is why that dull January day of 1906 at Versailles, and the comparatively even tenor of the Parisian way in these realistic times, were in great part his doing. One still remembers the Opéra Bouffe conspirators who took themselves with immense seriousness and would have been accepted with the same solemn earnestness had they succeeded, and the High Court trial by the

Senate, presided over by M. Fallières ; the Auteuil steeple-chase day, when a " real gentleman " bashed in M. Loubet's top-hat and narrowly missed hitting Countess Tornielli, wife of the Italian Ambassador ; and the Grand Prix day, a week later, when a Socialist army wearing scarlet button-holes went to the races—most of the men for the first time in their lives—spoiling for a fight with the Royalists, who stayed away. Those stirring times seem to the Parisian of to-day to have happened in the year one. It must be an age since the *jeune* threw away his red buttonhole and returned to literature for its own sake, leaving politics to politicians. He has a faint recollection of having in his youth saved the Republic. Generations, surely, have elapsed, since the Duc d'Orléans and Princes Victor and Louis Napoleon Bonaparte fell back into their accustomed oblivion. One cannot really tell how long it is since the last public movement for a " plebiscitary " President of the Republic. Where are the nightly riots of the Dreyfus case and Jew-baiting times, compared with which the Church rows after Disestablishment were merely pleasant demonstrations of playfulness in which mere handfuls of the population took part, with the rest looking on ironically ? To not one man in a hundred were the battles of 1899 indifferent, and the veriest stay-at-homes thirsted for the fray. The Parisian is astounded to reflect, when he does, how much ferment M. Loubet's seven years saw rise, effervesce, and fall flat. It all belongs to another age—an age when the Tsar still travelled and when he came for the second time to Paris, an age before King Edward had come officially to Paris, and half a dozen other Kings in his wake ; before Presidents of the Republic had visited London, Rome, and Madrid—and brought back from London the final pledge of the *entente cordiale*. The Third Republic in a few years matured into a comfortable



lady, "betwixt two ages," with a spark of waywardness still, now and then, when on a holiday, but long-headed and sedate at business—just such a portly lady as sits enthroned, in black silk, behind a Paris café desk, counting the profits, keeping the ledger, and collecting from each waiter the brass tallies for each drink.

January 17th, 1906, I really believe, closed the chapter of the lady's gadabout days. She will not have fancies now for eloping with plebiscitary pretenders, and no gallant with feather and sword thinks of abducting her. M. Loubet could safely hand her over to M. Fallières. No more romance, flirtatiousness, and dashing adventure, and no need to draw swords to save the lady. She was well able to look after herself, and her match with comfortable M. Fallières was just the proper marriage of convenience for a person of her sobered temperament and at her time of life. The Dreyfus Case may prove to have been her last flutter of really dramatic excitement, for Disestablishment never bore the fruits the parties of agitation hoped it would yield. Champions of great idealistic causes spoiling for rows have gone on spoiling for a number of years; prophets of noble and glorious upheavals calling upon the country to drag itself out of the slough of miserable contentment and leap to lofty aims of national adventure, still call in the wilderness.

Yet, at the election of M. Loubet's successor there seemed to be a chance for noble ideals and a hope that the mob would leave the muddy rut for the royal road to greatness. At all events, the idealists worked prodigiously hard for weeks before that fatal victory of low materialism. The only idealist who lay idle was M. Paul Déroulède. Even he appeared to have become infected by the contagion of common sense, and he retired to his country place while the battle of the big minds against the

*petits esprits* raged in Paris. The first rule of a recipe for an imaginative policy in France is to catch your hero. M. Paul Deschanel, whose neat person and comely face all who wanted to save France in 1899 had hoped to see at the Élysée, had unfortunate lapses afterwards into level-headedness, sandwiching proper high falutin' speeches with others which were tainted with sordid sense, so he was done for. There remained M. Paul Doumer, or rather he was abruptly discovered to be the heaven-sent man. He is the son of a railway navvy, was born in a garret, was a rough apprentice who educated himself in odd hours with admirable perseverance, and managed, by dint of night school classes and reading in bed when he ought to have been asleep, to take his degrees of Bachelor and later of Licentiate. He is a freethinker, was married only by M. le Mayor, and has not had one of his eight children christened. He was in a few days chosen as the champion of political Churchmen, and of the combination of Royalists, Bonapartists, Plebiscitists, vague "patriots," Nationalists, who yearned to revise the Constitution, i.e. to upset it somehow, which formed the party of imagination. M. Fallières is a small landowner; sells 500 casks a year of his own Loupillon, a *petit vin*, but pleasant; belongs to a very *petite bourgeoisie* family of two generations standing, and therefore is, if in a very small way, still a bourgeois, and never was a *prolétaire* like M. Doumer; had both his children christened, and has a daughter who was on the point at one time of entering a nunnery, but married instead. Several times in the Cabinet, and once Premier for twenty-four days, he was always a "Moderate," though he did bring in a bill, which failed, to control the Religious Orders; he never was a Radical, still less a Socialist, and he forbade, as usual, the red flag of Trade Unions—that red rag to a bull, with every Frenchman in office in the part

of the bull. In a few days he was the candidate of unpromising Republicanism, Radicalism, anti-Clericalism, and Socialism. This is an example of the beauties of French politics. Another is the fact that the party which ranges from Radicalism to Socialism, and which the other side calls Anarchist, or at least Revolutionist, is in France almost entirely the party of dull, plodding common sense. It is, in fact, a sort of Conservative party. It really wants few *novas res*, or wants them only gradually. It was anti-Clerical, of course, but anti-Clericalism is a very old thing in France—where some Churchmen have always been anti-Clerical. I remember the vicar of one of the most fashionable churches in Paris who not only was, but told you he was, an anti-Clerical. When the mild church riots broke out, at his church in particular, he retired instantly into the country, leaving his curate in charge of the rioting. To-day Radicalism is hardly even anti-Clerical, the working out of Disestablishment having deprived anti-Clericals of their cause, as it has shorn the Church of the chance of martyrdom. In 1906, anti-Clericalism was still an "actuality." The moderate little bourgeois who sells his wine and whose women folk are pious was the candidate elect of Republicans, Radicals, Socialist Radicals and Independent Socialists, who are all innately Conservative.

His only rival, who was to save France from him and sordid materialism and raise her to some idealist adventure, such as a new Boulangism, M. Paul Doumer, had been a Radical, but had thrown the Radicals over, had been a Colonial Proconsul, and had done little more than that, except once to beat the venerable M. Brisson, known rightly as the incorruptible and dreary, in the election for the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies, and also to write a Book, if one can call the *Livre de mes fils* written. Otherwise it is a grandiose work, in the sublimely simple style.

A friend of mine, who is an acute critic and does not belong to the politically imaginative party, but is an old and intimate friend of M. Paul Doumer, did not say much about the latter's Book. "Il y a des vérités bonnes à dire," is all he would commit himself to. It is a fine remark, and would do for the Book's epitaph. Beneath it could be graven some of M. Doumer's best things: "Action is life; thought and will are nought unless they serve action. Action, activity, work are necessary for the moral and physical equilibrium of man." "The active man is the useful man." "Action is movement, activity; that is, life." "Inertia, indolence, are immobility, and immobility is death." One is strongly reminded of Mr. Roosevelt. "Young man, learn to act." "Be active, laborious." "All action is not work." "It suffices not to apply oneself to action; one must also devote oneself to work." "Work elevates and ennobles man." "Work is a necessity for the great majority and a duty for all. If the march of humanity be viewed, it will be seen that work has always been the condition of its existence and the instrument of its progress." "Civilization is the daughter of work." "Work creates virtue. Idleness begets vice." "Work preserves life; idleness paralyses and kills. Iron left unused rusts. Brains and limbs unemployed become atrophied." "Work, work incessantly. Never be inactive, never be idle." And thus, *ad libitum*, for hundreds of pages. I did not find "Waste not, want not," "Honour thy parents," "Necessity is the mother of invention," "Honesty is the best policy" in the Book, but they must be there. On patriotism: "La Patrie c'est la France . . . c'est la mère commune de tous les Français. Elle est notre mère à tous, et c'est comme une mère que vous devons l'aimer." Justice could not have been done to the above in a translation. The poet continues: "The corollary of the duty of love



of country is the duty of serving the country." On love : " Young men, love, it is your duty ; learn to love with all your heart and all your soul. Love, young men ; choose well, then learn to love." On character : " To be true, simple, and natural conduces to being (which is equally necessary) sincere and frank, loyal and righteous." " Be tolerant, be chaste, be strong, be honest." Perhaps the finest observation is : " France more than ever needs men of action. She does not lack men of words." She does not indeed, discovering in M. Doumer one more wordy son—wordy to the extent of some 300 pages. For all his words, M. Doumer appears unaware of the value of words, and in his mind the meanings of words are loose, vague, and interchangeable. The Book, which had been timed to come out a few days before the Presidential election, was too much for some minds in the party of imagination, which does not necessarily lack taste, and the papers of the other side quoted largely and gleefully from it. Some of M. Doumer's journals were annoyed, and one of them, though particularly and vividly imaginative in politics, roundly said : " The man who wrote such gibberish may to-morrow represent France, the country of Voltaire, of Beaumarchais, of Renan ! "

Still, having caught your great man, you must stick to him. " Agir, c'est vivre," and " l'inertie, c'est l'immobilité " notwithstanding, Paul Doumer went to Versailles a great man. The *Figaro* said that the new President's duty, whoever he were, would be to " give back to our national genius the place which belongs to it." It sounded like an aphorism from the Book. What other could act up to such soulfully vague words than Paul Doumer ? " We lay in the mud during the seven years of Loubet. We shall be condemned to go on thus wallowing if no one gives us a hand to pull us out, and if Fallières comes in. The men of



hate, the envious, and the Franco-Germans have placed M. Doumer in a position such that he alone is now qualified to extricate us from putrefaction. It would be guilt in him to refuse to do so," wrote Henri Rochefort. One often feels tempted to wonder that Signor Rochefort will still be writing, for nobody marks him, but that is the dull Englishman's delusion, for he still is marked. His words on mud and putrefaction completely summed up the political programme of the imaginative party. Edouard Drumont also wrote expressively that "this *régime*, like certain venomous animals, defends itself by its own poison; it protects itself by the putridity which it begets." Save us, O Doumer, no matter how, but we want to be saved, was the cry. The party is ever calling on somebody to save itself and France. No further details of its programme are obtainable. Let us first be saved, then we shall see what we shall see. Canvassing for M. Doumer before the election consisted only of the cry "*He will save us.*" "Ha, a step nearer to the abyss," said a prominent lady of the party on first hearing of M. Fallières' election. With such a programme, intrigue in favour of M. Doumer was plain sailing. All deputies and senators who were considered wobbly were buttonholed and adjured to save France. "Are you good Frenchmen and true? Vote for Doumer. Fallières is death, Doumer is life. Shall France die?" As a matter of fact, the other side occasionally told its men: "Save the Republic." Even the common-sense party cannot help being imaginative sometimes, but it went in for melodrama much less than seven years before. Under the circumstances the canvassing of January, 1906, offered little variety. Really only one incident was curious—the persistent flight of the canard that M. Loubet would seek re-election. Every day, for weeks, one was told that foxy Loubet was fooling the field. François Coppée informed a

friend of mine that he knew exactly Loubet's game. A song, "Ne t'en va pas, Mimile," was printed, and an enormous edition offered for sale on the boulevards. The exact purpose of the move remained obscure. Probably the party foresaw defeat, and thought that the election of M. Fallières would mean a much worse beating than the re-election of M. Loubet, backed by prestige.

The idealists lost heart as the election drew near. The other side sobered down into solid confidence. The cry "Save the Republic!" raised again now and then, dropped, and that was a sure sign of success. When French politicians can afford to dispense with melodrama, one knows that one can safely plump for their cause. A steady wave of common sense was creeping up again, the wave which has flooded so much high falutin' in French politics in the past ten years. It bore M. Fallières to the "First Magistracy of the State." Like M. Paul Doumer, M. Fallières stood as a symbol, and is in part the man that opinion has made him. He might easily have been pitted by moderate Republicans against Socialists, opposed as a small holder of the soil and a tiny capitalist to the wage-earners, and held up by Radicals as the type of the true and original Conservative element in French country life. But it was no time for the niceties of theoretical politics, however dear to the forensic mind. Differences were sunk in the course of common sense. M. Fallières stood as a champion—the St. George to slay the dragon of rhetoric. It may be that he can spout with the rest, and possibly he could even write a Book, though I doubt whether he would, if he could. But circumstances made him the champion of levelheadedness, whatever capacities for political romance he might have, in common with most Frenchmen. Yet he was not entirely the man made by the moment. He certainly has more levelheadedness than M. Doumer has imagination,

and he is a safer man naturally than Paul Doumer is a great man.

Almost immediately after his election, I watched M. Fallières during one of the half a dozen congratulatory ceremonies which he had to go through in the evening. M. Rouvier, screwing up and unscrewing his eyes behind his glasses, his face twitching, his shoulders going up and down, and his arms and hands playing about jerkily, buzzed round the President-elect. Other ministers, members of Parliament one after the other, official after official, came up and buzzed also. M. Fallières, burly and comparatively tall, his rather rugged face red against his very white hair, stood firm to receive compliments. His eye wandered now and then, and what it said plainly was, "The heat in here is unbearable. I do wish they would open a window." His very first attitude, on being raised to the highest dignity in France, seemed to say that he had come into office not to attitudinize. Few French politicians would have escaped, or could have resisted, the temptation to be dramatic at such a moment. The new President was not at all dramatic. Nor had he been before his election, nor has he been since. No authentic record is discoverable of his having, during his entire public career, yet struck an attitude. That is his power which raised him to eminence. He did not canvass before the election, except that he made one speech at a public meeting in the South, in which he did not even announce that, if chosen, he would save the Republic. Such restraint would have been utterly beyond the powers of many French politicians, and of some among the sincerest. He said merely that if the Republican Party wanted him, he was ready, and that, if chosen, he would do his duty according to the Constitution. Rather an obvious statement it sounds to English ears, but it came with refreshing simplicity to M. Fallières' followers,

while his adversaries called it a base profession of flabby soullessness. M. Doumer was ready to bring up the Constitution in the way it should go. President Fallières had no intention of playing any heroic pranks. That was the grievance against him and his party. The President of the Republic has great powers, some of which have fallen into abeyance since Marshal MacMahon tried to drive a coach and four through the Constitution. The results were disastrous to himself, and would have been disastrous to the Third Republic had he succeeded. M. Doumer was prepared to drive an 80 h.p. motor through any constitution, in order to "save France," and that was his own particular *raison d'être*. From what France would have been saved is unknown. The imaginative party considers it debasing to be practical, because vague theory covers a multitude of contradictions. Whether the country will ever follow it into the region of soaring imprecision again remains to be seen, and the national love of eloquence may one day give it fresh chances. But, so far, the potency of big words has dwindled, not grown, in France, and that has been the foremost change in French politics during the last ten years, as it was the chief lesson taught by the election of M. Fallières.

After election, he remained rigidly faithful in office to the matter-of-fact policy of which he was chosen as the symbol. He has been the most derided President of the Third Republic, not excepting even Jules Grévy, for his predecessor M. Loubet lived down obloquy and ridicule, and M. Fallières has not outlived ridicule yet. He has been derided for his face, his bulk, his clothes, his ties. When a café waiter out of work plucked his beard in the street, Paris drawing-rooms, showing not the least sense of national dignity or even of mere humanity, enjoyed the joke uproariously for a week. When Edward VII died, Parisians

talked as if they had lost a sort of uncrowned King of Paris, beside whom their own President of the Republic counted neither as a head of the State nor as a Parisian. M. Fallières in office has not achieved either greatness or popularity, yet he has been true to his trust. He might have been a little more decorative in his presence, he could not have been safer as a man. When he was elected, France would not have wanted a General Boulanger if she could have had one for the asking. The election of M. Fallières was one of the signs of the growing political realism of the country. It would have been difficult to make a less picturesque choice, it would have been impossible to make one more realistic.



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## VII. *The Fall of Théophile Delcassé*

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ANY stick was good enough to beat the unfortunate M. Delcassé with in his own country, any stone served for pelting him. Never was there such a fall since Jules Ferry fell over the defeat of Lang Son. French public opinion did not make a pretty show in this circumstance. None so poor for the time being to do reverence to the Minister who was a great man to two-thirds of France during nearly seven years of office—traitor though he were according to the remaining third. Of all the Paris papers, only the *Débats* had the decency, at least, to give him one consolatory pat on the back, when he was kicked out—for kicked out he was. Every other helped in the kicking with shameless gusto. Some turned against him in a night. The Paris press has hardly ever before during the Third Republic been so well agreed in any one purpose as it was in rending M. Delcassé. Once he was the one French statesman in the view of millions of Frenchmen, probably the majority of the people. He alone held the threads of France's foreign policy. Not another man living was supposed to be capable of disentangling them. He was supreme and unapproachable. To nearly all the Republican press he was the great augur. He hinted, and was obeyed on the instant. If a paragraph displeased him, patriotism immediately commanded that it should be blue-pencilled, or, if already published, apologized for. In the Chamber and Senate his word was law. Not even the most truculent Royalist or the most iconoclastic Revolutionary Socialist ventured to have an opinion when he had spoken. He

incarnated France, his voice was France's, and true Frenchmen bowed their heads listening to the oracle. To the general public he was the one Cabinet Minister who knew his business. The average citizen—not of course the Nationalist suffering from hypertrophy of the patriotic fibre, nor, more recently, the Socialist of the Jaurès shade, or the Clemenceau-coloured Radical, but the plain, Divine Average—conceded to you that all the rest of the Cabinet might be, and probably was, more or less incompetent. “But we have Delcassé. He knows his business—he knows!” M. Delcassé's reputation was impressive, he had been the one French Minister for many years who has impressed the foreign observer. He fell; not the least pretence of diplomatic indisposition was put forward, the Premier coolly announced that, the Cabinet having unanimously dropped M. Delcassé, he had been got rid of; and all France jumped upon him with fierce glee.

A dozen different political influences meeting, practically for the first time, at one same point, brought about M. Delcassé's downfall. Had the conjunction not occurred, he would have remained a great man. Different parties attacked him for totally different, often contrary, reasons for years, and he flourished. Morocco suddenly provided the common ground on which opposite factions met to join against him, and, meeting, drew behind them the majority which had looked upon them as mere minorities before. Consistency then was of no importance so long as M. Delcassé were “disembarked.” Politicians who had cursed him long for one failing now cursed him louder for an opposite fault. His former supporters, who were ready to champion him to the death twenty-four hours earlier, instantly closed up the ring round him, on any pretext. The President of the Republic, his last stand-by, had to let him go, and he went, in a storm of execration, with hardly

two or three voices even of damning faint praise. The story of the conjunction of political influences which overthrew M. Delcassé is one of the most intricate chapters of modern French public life, and not an edifying one. When a public man is denounced for a rabid Revolutionist by one critic and damned as a hidebound, toadying Tory by another, there must be some flaw somewhere in the judgment of either of the two critics, and probably of both. When both shake hands and make friends to fall upon the public man together, one is driven to have serious doubts of their honesty as well as of their sense. That is the exact story in simplified outline of the hounding of M. Delcassé. The actual facts were, of course, much more complicated. Not two opposite parties, but a dozen all in varying degrees at daggers drawn with one another, joined against him. But any one party should in honesty have stood by him through thick and thin, if what the eleven other parties said of him had been true. That precisely was the humour of the situation. One man told you, "Down with Delcassé, autocracy's henchman"; another cried, "Impeach the traitorous Radical Delcassé," and you were bewildered to find the two shouters agreeing that their two shouts amounted very much to the same thing, and that their conflicting views for any practical purpose coincided. What the practical purpose was the unhappy Delcassé soon learnt. Yet to the ordinary mind the proposition that M. Delcassé was sold either to England or to Russia seems a fairly rigorous dilemma. That proposition sums up in their two extreme terms the political opinions under which he fell, innumerable shades of difference being set aside. The views even of some of the level-headed among his enemies inclined to one or other of the two extreme terms. That M. Delcassé had long thriven on the modern equivalent of "Pitt's money" had been, of course, repeated in print

daily since he took office. Of late the other side said, though it did not actually publish, that he took Russian money over the Baltic Fleet neutrality affair. To estimate how far such pleasing fanciful assertions are believed in by those who make them, and to determine who among the outside public takes them to contain one grain of truth, is a nice study for the assiduous and long-practised student of French life. In the present case the two extreme terms are stated only for the purpose of "clearing the situation," and of planting at least two plain sign-posts in a bewildering maze. As for that, the common French mind, fond of simplicity, is often led to believe in such straightforward propositions as that which accounts for a public man's actions by his having been bribed, precisely because of its love of a good, honest, logical fiction and repugnance for the subtleties and inconsistencies of reality. Hence even the more acute minds in French politics either honestly hanker after such finely simple explanations or disingenuously assume them to approximate the truth, so that their more ingenuous readers or hearers may have "some plain fact to go upon"—plain facts of the kind being generally fables—and that is why the scandalous dilemma mentioned represents the two poles between which the influences which overthrew M. Delcassé oscillate.

The Nationalists, for whom M. Anatole France found the delicious name of "les Trublions," and whom every enemy of the French people ought to support heartily, branded M. Delcassé as a traitor for abandoning the allied Russian Government in its hour of need. The Radical-Socialists held him up to execration for having truckled to the effete Russian autocracy. Royalists called him stingingly a worthy Minister of the Republic and a worthy colleague in a Cabinet which had torn down the pillars of society and generally "disorganized everything." Socialists denounced



him as a worshipper of despotism in his heart who rode rough-shod over the elected representatives of the people. M. Delcassé must still laugh rather bitterly when he reviews it all. The game of contradictions was carried on with the greatest elaborateness. Nationalists for years, of course, called M. Delcassé "Fashoda Delcassé." As he did not get France into, but got her out of, the Fashoda morass, the assumption must be that he ought not to have got her out of it, but to have then stood for war instead of peace. But the greatest grievance against him afterwards was precisely that he did not give in to Germany. When the Franco-Italian understanding was formed, largely through M. Delcassé's policy, little was said by the Nationalists. Later it was discovered to be his worst blunder, because the Triple Alliance was, it seemed, suddenly remembered, and the failure of the late Minister's great political scheme of detaching Italy, as a step towards isolating Germany, was ridiculed. The Anglo-French understanding was first received with mysterious warnings of "We fear the Greeks. . . ." It was afterwards accepted by Nationalist politicians because popular feeling forced them to accept it. Then came the cry, "We told you so. Delcassé gave the substance for the shadow ; worse, gave up comfortable rights in Newfoundland and Egypt (of all places !) for a hornets' nest in Morocco." Had he done the reverse, and allowed Great Britain a free hand in Morocco, one shudders to think what the Nationalist outcry would have been. Finally, ever since the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the fallen Minister had been called upon to "stand loyally by the ally"—how, was never explained—and told daily that the yellow peril threatened French Indo-Chinese possessions ; was cursed loudly for "leaving Russia in the lurch," and scorned for truckling to the Rising Sun. One-hundredth part of the patriotic advice given to M. Delcassé would,



if he had followed it, have brought on general war instantly. But at last he fell because he was thought to have offended the German Kaiser. So much for Nationalists.

Radical Republicans, Socialist Radicals, and Socialists pure were not much more self-consistent, apart from the fact of the utter contradiction between their grievances and those of the Nationalists against M. Delcassé. Nearly all the purely Republican party frankly welcomed the understanding with Italy and more particularly that with England. The hostility of the pure Socialists was against "le Delcassé du knout"; and it grew as Russian defeats accumulated. After Liao-Yang they had no hesitation in branding M. Delcassé as a traitor to his own country for not denouncing the Russian alliance instantly. After the Hull outrage, he was told that he was a Macchiavellian firebrand, burning for war. He was underhandedly fanning the desperate desire of the Russian Government to drag anybody and everybody, and first of all England, into the conflagration. When Japan protested in the question of French neutrality, he was instantly condemned for having slyly and determinedly connived at helping along the halting Baltic fleet. When that fleet was no more, he was asked what his unfairness had served, except a Japanese triumph. All the while he was being held up to opprobrium by all true sons of freedom for having done his best to support the Russian Government against its Russian enemies, the Liberals and Revolutionists, by putting pressure on the French Home Office to increase police supervision by the Sûreté Générale, acting with the Russian secret police in France, of Russian exiles in Paris. In short, "Delcassé and his little father the Tsar" were throughout coupled together, in thickly humorous satire, at the very time when another party was railing at "Delcassé the Anglomaniac." What sort of a figure France would have cut had she coolly

dropped the Franco-Russian alliance in the midst of the war, Socialists never stopped to inquire. Whether her position later would have been a very comfortable one, without the Entente Cordiale, Nationalists never stopped to inquire.

The Minister continued to reign over the Quai d'Orsay with apparently ever blander serenity. Between the two opposite poles of political opinion the Moderates wobbled as weakly as the Extremists in their attitude towards the awe-inspiring Foreign Secretary. Now pacific penetration into Morocco was an idea worthy of a Richelieu; now it was fatuous folly. On this point, Socialists only, headed by M. Jaurès, were consistent, and opposed M. Delcassé's Moroccan policy. But Nationalists, Royalists, Moderates, even quite steady heads, never could decide whether to call him rash for going too far in the enterprise, or pusillanimous for not going far enough. When all the political influences met and the Minister fell, all agreed to jump on him, each for an essentially different motive. It was an extraordinary and, as already observed, not a pretty sight.

Was the man's own personality a factor in the strange product? He had a breakneck fall, but after a giddy rise. The amiable and active journalist, with a serious turn of mind, who had trotted about the lobbies of the Chamber of Deputies, and had been at intervals a conscientious Colonial Secretary, was suddenly called to the helm and, piloting France, weathered the worst storm which had ever threatened her since 1871, for the Schnaebeli incident was naught compared with the Fashoda crisis. The history of Fashoda days is so well known that it is almost forgotten, but in an instant, in every mind, the two pictures can be called up and contrasted, of France's position in Europe then, and of her position now. Everyone in Europe knows that the contrast proves what M. Delcassé was worth. None

knew it better than himself, and he showed that he knew it. His rule over France's foreign policy was Olympian. During four or five years he was a deity in the clouds to the rest of France. There had never been such sovereignty in his country under the Third Republic before.

Of course at the Quai d'Orsay he was prophet, and few Foreign Secretaries have ever been so devoutly looked up to by *la carrière* as this ex-journalist who was not of it, and who had once trotted about the "Hall of Lost Footsteps" at the Chamber. He acquired the diplomatic mind with immediate and brilliant ease. Outwardly he never learnt or attempted to learn the diplomatic manner, and the merest attaché could give him points on that score. Outwardly, also, he always remained simple of bearing, and still reminded one of the "little journalist" who used to buttonhole Messieurs les Députés in the lobbies and converse with them in a grave whisper. But morally and mentally he set an example which the whole *carrière* felt it safe to admire and to imitate. No one was a more devout and jealous believer in State secrets than he. Diplomacy became a religion to him, and no one was ever more loyal than he to his faith. Trickery he had a gentlemanly objection to, like most really convinced diplomatists. His religion was that of faith in the far-seeing and lofty diplomatic brain which plans policy like a game of chess, but always plays the game. It is no secret that some curious moves of the Russian Foreign Office, generally inspired, if not commanded, by some other office of the infinite bureaux of the Russian Administration, distressed him. Of late he learnt to like having to do with Downing Street, because it does play a good, honest, solemn game. But he insisted on being the independent champion of France at the board. He knew the secrets of State, he must order each move unadvised, not even spoken to. Not

one Cabinet Minister, in the five successive Cabinets to which he belonged, was ever allowed more than an outsider's glimpse into M. Delcassé's mysteries. He treated with Sovereigns like a Sovereign. He was the ideal Great High Diplomatist in the eyes of *la carrière*. Parliament to him was an article for home consumption only. No one who has not followed foreign policy debates closely in the Chamber and Senate can imagine the hushed awe which fell on either House when M. Delcassé spoke. Again and again a Nationalist or a Socialist made ferocious efforts to "interpellate" him, and succumbed in the religious, paralysing atmosphere which enveloped the Foreign Secretary. Nothing was more delicious than to watch the "interpellator's" bounce and to hear his big words when he had (which was seldom) succeeded in drawing M. Delcassé into accepting a question. The member would walk down from the tribune bursting with pride. Up would walk little, eyeglassed M. Delcassé, and in a plain voice would "make a declaration," often read, always written out beforehand, in which the interpellator's question was severely ignored. A lofty allusion to certain matters of France's foreign policy which it would have been inexpedient to divulge, a stereotyped patriotic passage, and the House was dumbed, passed meekly to the Order of the Day, and once more consecrated M. Delcassé. When, for the first time in the House, M. Delcassé was actually heckled, in the mildest way, and M. Rouvier had to, or thought he had to, speak after him, it was the beginning of the end. M. Delcassé never forgave M. Rouvier or the House.

What the general public thought of the great prophet of the Quai d'Orsay was simple enough. The man in the street looked upon M. Delcassé as an Olympian in the clouds utterly beyond his ken. The Foreign Secretary passed through the Dreyfus case, the first Nationalist crisis,



the sixth or seventh Déroulède affair, the anti-Loubet campaign, the burlesque conspiracy and the High Court trial, and the Church *v.* State, or State *v.* Church fever, and preserved his majesty unscathed, his ethereal fastness inviolate. The man in the street saw only what he took to be the tangible results of M. Delcassé's high works, King Edward's visit, King Vittorio Emanuele's visit, and approved. Hardly a word in editorial or in Parliamentary report ever enlightened him as to the inner workings of the Foreign Secretary's policy.

Then Morocco, and the Kaiser's cruise to Tangier : it was a thunderbolt. England talked of French neutrality in the Far East ; nobody cared a rap about that in France. Placid elderly ladies in their drawing-rooms looked perturbed. "What was thought in political circles of the situation ? Very grave, was it not ?" One hoped the Baltic Fleet would clear out of Kamranh Bay. "Oh, not that—that is a detail. But Morocco—ah, Morocco !—and the Kaiser !" The general public in Paris thus thought, and often still thinks, in fearful interjections with shakes of the head. The Kaiser would be delightfully surprised to learn what a great man he is to the Parisian in the street. Under the Linden he is often looked upon as a joke, occasionally grim. On the boulevards he is always taken seriously, as a big, brainy, far-sighted statesman, with frequent flashes of genius. The haste with which M. Delcassé was hounded off because he was considered to have annoyed the Kaiser, the funk—there is no other word for it—inspired by the idea that the Kaiser was annoyed, were not pretty phenomena in French psychology. They were due to various distinct mental causes, besides circumstances. The main outside circumstance, of course, was the pricking of the bubble of Russian might. The psychological causes were many and conflicting. Nationalism, a morbid growth of



patriotism, was one. The Nationalist burthen was and is that France has gone to the dogs. She has no army—it has been systematically destroyed; she has no navy—it has been deliberately ruined; she has no power, influence, or credit worth speaking of. The average public has so often been told all this that a percentage—say a third—has come to believe it, and to believe that France would be instantly smashed by Germany in an armed conflict. The unprejudiced foreign observer is not at all so sure on the point, nor is, to all appearances, the German Headquarters Staff. In short, anyone wanting to know the lowest opinions held in the world at the present day of French military power must read the French “patriotic” press. This kind of patriot will apparently stick at nothing to prove his point. If he be logical, he would rejoice to see France defeated by Germany, because the Nationalist party is at present in opposition. Hence his indecent joy at the downfall of M. Delcassé. Exactly two Nationalist leaders (MM. Paul Déroulède and Marcel Habert) discovered, after the event, that Germany had scored, and tried, vainly, to restrain their partisans’ exultation. The only wonder is that the average civilian and the average army officer in France have remained, take them for all in all, cool-headed and sensible. If every French officer joined a “Lay-down-your-arms” Peace Society, he would be hardly more handicapped in his calling than if he were to yield at last to the persuasions of the party which tells him that, whenever he does fight, he is bound to be beaten.

The second psychological reason why the French public was thrown off its balance by the mere idea of the German Government’s displeasure is almost the exact contradiction of the former. The level-headed Frenchman who thirsts for good, sound, sensible actions in tune with the sound sense which he himself possesses naturally loves peace in the first

place. But there is a further cause for his objection to a disagreement with Germany. He worships efficiency, and nothing will get out of his head the notion that the Kaiser and German organization incarnate efficiency. For sheer admiration of the Kaiser and of his beneficent, enlightened rule, go not to Russia, where he is laughed at, not to England, not to the German professional and business middle classes, but to France. Seen from the boulevards, the German railways are perfect, the German Post Office is perfect, German trade is perfectly managed. The army must be an equally perfect organization, and the navy for its size must be the most perfectly organized in the world. Organization : that is the average, level-headed Frenchman's shibboleth, and Germany stands for it. "We have dash, we have brains, we have money, but where is our organization ?" he asks. "We could not stand against German method and system." What he would say of British systems and methods it is impossible to imagine, if he knew them, but he does not. He looks only at British private enterprise and activity and takes them to be the fruits of far-reaching organization. Towards Germany his attitude often works out at much the same thing as that of the Nationalists, of whom he is properly afraid, but it comes from different, almost opposite causes. For he deplores the wild fancies of some patriots among his countrymen as much as anybody. Yet he was as wild as the rest in excommunicating M. Delcassé. That is because he thought he found the late Minister out in a high-flying attempt at "adventurous policy," and of such he has by now a holy horror. M. Delcassé's unfortunate foible for mystery, and his shrouding himself in a cloudland far above the eye even of Parliament, had something to do with the sudden turning of the average sensible French public round to rend him when he descended from the clouds in a bit of

a fix, from which, however, the country might have successfully extricated him if it had loyally backed him.

The psychology of the ordinary level-headed Frenchman was the surest pledge that M. Delcassé's fall could not have dragged down with it a single brick of the Entente Cordiale. Wild adventure is exactly what the quietly thrifty, active, workaday majority of his countrymen do not want, and it is the last thing the understanding with Great Britain could bring.

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## VIII. *The Fall and Rise of Georges Clemenceau*

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WHEN at last M. Clemenceau became Prime Minister *in esse*, he had long been Premier *in posse* already, and one wondered that M. Sarrien would still be speech-making ; nobody marked him. Everyone hung on M. Clemenceau's words and watched for his deeds. M. Clemenceau has that rare gift which if the solidest statesmen lack they never will be called great ; he can always, when he pleases, strike the public imagination, and he pleases often. Whatever he does or says has that one quality : he sends out a circular to the Prefects, the thousand and first which has reached them from the Home Office, and a phrase in it catches the fancy, compelling public attention, though no one outside the Civil Service, and possibly few in it, ever thought of reading a line of the thousand circulars of his predecessors ; he reforms his department, cutting down a few hundred pounds expenses, and everyone admires, though the Home Secretaries who went before might reform and nobody cared ; he has his study at the Place Beauvau Ministry re-upholstered, and the public rejoices to learn that he has done away with heavy hangings, let in sunlight, and had the Gobelins cleaned ; he tours his native province forensically, and his luck has it that his fellow-countrymen are Chouans, that the tour takes on a picturesqueness of which other statesmen's political raids on rural districts are bare, and that speaking, he a freethinking Republican Vendéen, to

Vendéen Catholics and Royalists, he finds words, honeyed or pungent, on love of country and on love of freedom—freedom spelling in the Vendée faithlessness towards “throne and altar”—which soothe or rankle, stir friendly or hostile passions, but at all events stir something, while other Ministers may make speeches in their native villages, and who minds them? because neither they nor their surroundings strike the imagination. This doubtless is talent as well as luck in M. Clemenceau, but it is partly luck. Not only has he imagination, but there seems to be imaginativeness in the things, circumstances, and events in which he moves. Luck of this sort is a sign of an arresting personality. Other Ministers go to Carlsbad, but Paris cares not; other Ministers may visit German picture galleries in their holidays, but M. Clemenceau, in a tweed suit, with a bag perhaps containing a Baedeker, “doing” the Berlin museums and avoiding Embassy dinners because he brought no dress clothes, interests Parisians, as Waldeck-Rousseau interested them. Other Ministers have had gay pasts, may have lolled in the ballet-girls’ green-room at the Opera and have ridden in the Bois of mornings; have even been Hellenists as well and kept a Plato by their bedside o’ nights; but M. Clemenceau has done or does these things with a peculiar picturesqueness of his own, and they are remembered of him, while other men behave similarly amid general indifference. M. Clemenceau never is indifferent.

The first fall of Clemenceau is one of the adventures that made the man. Few public men ever fell as heavily; none ever recovered from such a fall. In 1908 he was at the top of a public career; fifteen years before he had fallen, like Lucifer—and he was the arch-fiend to the Opportunists. From Panama days, the days of M. Millevoye’s ludicrous libel, based on the half-caste Norton’s forged evidence of some absurd purchase



of Clemenceau by British Secret Service money, and suggested apparently by the fact of M. Clemenceau's speaking English, but the days also of the historic Bournemouth invalid and buyer-up of political consciences, Cornelius Herz, whose hold on him Clemenceau could not deny, and from the final crash at the General Elections in August and September, 1893, when Clemenceau was hounded out of his constituency in the Var by a mob yelling "Oh ! yes," and meaning thus to prove that some mud always sticks—from that fall to this eminence, a wonderful journey was covered, more wonderful because half of it was trodden in dogged retirement, steadily tramped without bluff or advertisement. If Clemenceau went down in thunder and lightning, he rose again quietly and without noise. That is one more picturesque touch to his career. Other men, if they rise from a fall, start up again meteorically as they fell ; there are few examples of cast-out politicians coming in again by any other means than a sudden political change. No such abrupt turn of fortune brought Clemenceau in ; he was indeed brought in again hardly by political fortune at all. What public man has ever sought, or having sought carried out, the same method of redemption ? Clemenceau the politician, and purely a politician as far as the public could see, revelling in political intrigue and unsparing in political warfare, draining the cup of political power and enjoying without compunction every benefit, down to the very pickings, which political influence can give, fell, was kicked out of politics savagely, and with what delight only those who knew his opponents remember. I can recall a diplomatist in a high position, now dead, who had been a faithful henchman of Gambetta, gloating ferociously over Clemenceau's fall, when I met him at the time. There was no pity for the man, as he had had no pity for the statesmen whom he had overturned ; there was no pretence at believing the

Norton forgeries, but no shame, if not in using them as a weapon, at least in exulting that they with the Herz scandal had killed the arch-enemy : Clemenceau was down, what mattered it how he went down ? He would not have spared a foe, and he was not spared. The fall of Delcassé was a trifling tumble compared with the crash with which Clemenceau fell. The man himself well measured his fall and must have reflected at once that there could be no climbing up the same path again ; he chose another, having imagination. Clemenceau, the wily, unscrupulous, worldly politician was heard of no more ; two years later Clemenceau the philosopher, Pantheist and praiser of life astonished a totally different world which had hardly spoken his name before. I have his “ *la Mêlée Sociale* ” and “ *le grand Pan* ” (1895), with dedications to me as one of the editors of a delightfully absurd little magazine which existed to praise Life and is long since dead. Such a detail shows the picturesqueness of the man ; conceive the smart politician, hurled from the politician’s paradise to the bottomest hell of unpopularity, sitting calmly down to praise the god Pan, and under the symbol of Pan, the very life of this day and this world, to justify the ways of modern life to philosophical youth, when modern life had played him so scurvy a trick. It was delightful and it charmed *les jeunes* of literary Paris who had not abhorred, but, worse, ignored Clemenceau up till then. Surely no damned statesman ever before sought such a path of salvation ; few politicians in France or anywhere are capable of following such a path if they tried. Clemenceau, step by step, clambered his way, and it led him circuitously where he was but yesterday ; after winning *les jeunes* he forced himself gradually upon the public imagination again, book by book, with leading articles day by day, steadily working from philosophy towards public affairs afresh,

through the Dreyfus case, Church and State, and the Franco-German crisis, and he stood at last in public life again on a higher eminence than he had ever reached before.

There are (let us not say there were) thus three Clemenceaus, all three picturesque. He was the *tombreur de ministères*, Radical leader, the essence and marrow of a politician, and seemingly nothing else ; he slew Cabinet after Cabinet when he wished ; he had only to say the word and Governments tumbled. Not one stood against him, and he was dreaded and hated more than any other Opposition leader then or now. He joyed in triumph and power insolently. Foes watched him ride by, smart, dapper, quiet, and with the subdued distinguished air, in the Bois of a morning, and ground their teeth to see him nonchalant, careless and easy, a couple of hours before he was due at the Chamber to smash them with a biting, horribly acute speech that picked out all the weak points in their fabrics of policy, summoned with a few happy words a general onslaught, and upset the Cabinet like a house of cards ; then to go off smiling to dinner with a party of stars of the opera ballet and to the Foyer de la Danse afterwards, there to entertain the ladies with stories of the light side of politics. No wonder he was hated ; he might have been forgiven his successes in the Chamber, not his successes in green-rooms ; he had "the chic," what Lavedan has called "the manner," and Cabinet Ministers had it not. That was the first of the three Clemenceaus.

The second vanished from public sight totally for a time, gave up politics, green-rooms and riding, returned quietly to his retreat in a countrified part of Paris and to his Greek. The political world said he was morally dead, the literary world discovered him as a strangely strong and direct stylist, and the public slowly learnt to look to Clemenceau

the leader writer after hearing wonders of Clemenceau the thrower of Cabinets. He had conquered young literary Paris, then, in the middle of the nineties, waking up to a Whitmanish worship of modern life, which partly meant that it was learning, as it has since learnt very well, to be practical after the idealism of the years before. But young literary Paris was little to him, and he passed on, had to pass on, to reconquer the great and big public that makes quick reputations for elderly men in a hurry. His paper, *La Justice*, after support from Cornelius Herz, had died in painful throes. The *Aurore* rose, and a few days after its rising began the "Dreyfus is innocent!" campaign. Jaurès led the speech-making tours with the three words for a war-cry. But Clemenceau was one of the first to start the campaign in print, and he kept it up with a pertinacity, a variety and a freshness which astound anyone who knows what daily writing is. There are no Saturdays for French daily journalists; Clemenceau continued the campaign without a break for, I think, something like two years, and his last leader was as strong as the first. By this time he was a public man again. The Franco-German crisis of 1905 crowned him. He was—who was not?—one of those who trampled on Delcassé, but he trod on the Kaiser's toes also. M. Jaurès strove and sweated and split straws to prove that if Germany was wrong France was not altogether right, and that if there were six words to say for France over Morocco Germany had half a dozen to say on her side. M. Clemenceau bluntly plumped for patriotism, recalled 1870-1, and "bucked up" France. His influence was the strongest reagent upon the sudden funk of the country in the summer of 1905, and summoned a rather tardy, but still timely, front of confidence. Thence dated his great war with Jaurès. Thenceforward he was once more a political leader; he had been elected a Senator of the Var, which had before thrown



him out of the Chamber where he had long sat as its Deputy. A few more passages of arms against the "anti-patriotism" propaganda—with which M. Jaurès coyly plays, now taking it up, now letting it drop—and M. Clemenceau was ripe for office; ripe at last after many years, for the thrower of Cabinets had never before even been offered Cabinet rank.

It was only fair that the Bloc should bring the third Clemenceau to power, since the first Clemenceau had invented the name, years before the thing and many of the men—M. Combes, for instance—had been thought of by the public mind. On the withdrawal from the Comédie Française, by Government order, after one performance, of M. Sardou's *Thermidor*, never since played in Paris, Clemenceau in the Chamber exclaimed that the Bloc of the men who made the First Revolution, from first to last, was intangible, and that the Third Republic was not to discriminate between this man and that, nor to accept the inheritance of one party and reject that of another; the First Revolution must be taken as a whole Bloc or not at all. The word had a strange fortune, remaining "in the air" for years, till caught by the alliance of Republicans against Church and Reaction which grew out of the Dreyfus case. Like Gambetta, Clemenceau has been one of the few public men whose phrases have stuck; others coin watchwords by the score and nobody remembers them.

In his first years of office the third Clemenceau was as picturesque as the earlier two. If, in fact, one were asked to find one salient quality in his administration, it would be difficult to find another than picturesqueness. He was neither consistent—indeed, cheerfully inconsistent—nor remarkably politic, nor particularly strong; but he began by being picturesque. Taking office on March 14th, 1906, four days after the Courrières catastrophe, he was plunged



at once into events which might have dismayed another, not him. At Lens in the midst of strikers whom incredibly callous employers had, by behaviour suggesting almost malice prepense, driven from grief to anger, he abruptly cut adrift from Prefect, Mayor, Deputy, General commanding troops, and sought a barbarously decorated dancing-hall through a smelly passage behind a dirty taproom, to talk to the possibly revolutionist and certainly unconciliating leaders of the extreme wing of the miners, and to tell them that they must learn to deserve freedom. The thin, grey Minister with the sharp eyes and heavy moustache, in plain suit and bowler, stood in the crowd of loud and rough men and louder and rougher women, with clouds of tobacco smoke and a faint smell of mawkish beer rolling over them, and when he could be heard, talked to them of the responsibilities of liberty. That was just like Clemenceau. Little came of it all, the terrible and mild little Broutchoux, supposed to be the ringleader of the Red Syndicate, was run in for pushing two gendarmes, literally carted away at dead of night, and shut up for six months. Strikes spread, strikers broke windows, an army of troops was poured into the district, M. Clemenceau washed his hands of it all, a lieutenant was thrown from his horse in a scrimmage on to a stone pavement and killed, and M. Clemenceau was called a criminal by some Conservatives for not having had strikers shot down, and a tyrant by some Socialists for having sent troops to the mines at all. He did not care a rap what he was called and that also was like Clemenceau. He had tired of all the strike business, and thenceforth let his Prefect and the troops manage it among them, though moderating their zeal now and then. Of course the strike died down and the strikers went back to the mines, having gained nothing at all. M. Clemenceau had slipped out of the whole business with eel-like dexterity. But he had had

his chance of a picturesque touch at the start. In one great 1st of May hoax, M. Clemenceau was cheerily inconsistent, and outwardly at least impolitic and weak ; he allowed the Prefect of police to play into the hands of the scaremongers and to help them to befool Paris as Paris never was befooled before. Presumably all the time the Minister had his tongue in his cheek and thought that if Paris chose to make a fool of itself he would let it ; anyhow, the Prefect could be held responsible. The Minister merely created a diversion at which he must have chuckled to himself, by having private houses searched, without warrants, in the absence of the tenants, to obtain evidence of a combined Royalist and Anarchist plot, to which nobody ever after heard even a reference made, the whole counterhoax having been dropped with astounding coolness. M. Clemenceau's total unscrupulousness in politics is one of his charms ; a few weeks before taking office he had himself brought in a Bill, which long lay before the Senate, teeming with fine protections for individual liberty, in particular against domiciliary police visits. M. Clemenceau never blundered by attempting self-justification, but let the matter drop as quickly and quietly as possible, and continued to be picturesque in other ways. His great tournament at the rostrum with Jaurès was a stroke of genius. Who won, is neither here nor there, but the mere fact of a Home Secretary utterly ignoring his Prime Minister and delivering what was a philosophical thesis on Individualism, varied by side hits at practical and personal questions, was interesting : anti-Socialist opinion in the country joyed, and loved Clemenceau for a week. Other Ministers have answered the usual Jaurès "interpellations," but their answers have not lived more than a sitting of the House. M. Clemenceau saw the moment's opportunity and took it, to strike the public imagination. Of course, he struck forcibly and with those keen thrusts that

make an adversary wince. But other speakers are as eloquent as he ; he had the cleverness, or the successful audacity, to leap immediate issues, on which other Ministers would have dwelt, and to aim directly at wider and higher range, because he felt that at the moment public opinion would answer the appeal. Public opinion certainly did not resist him. The Home Secretary grew steadily larger in the public eye than the Premier ; even at Carlsbad he went on growing.

While M. Clemenceau was away, M. Briand, then Minister of Public Instruction and Public Worship, was given something of a chance by the Encyclical *Gravissimo officii munere*, and took it with a zest, positively insisting on being " interviewed " right and left. But M. Clemenceau came back jauntily via German art galleries, and M. Briand soon afterwards said, " I will not speak another word on Church and State." M. Clemenceau, for plain reasons, said few words on the question, because neither he nor anyone else really and exactly knew what was to come of it, but he uttered one phrase that has stuck, while none of M. Briand's have, turning on a picturesque ablative absolute. " Me minister, not a church in France shall be closed." The " me minister " was just like Clemenceau.

One last picture of the man : the renegade Vendéen, come back to his native Vendée, Minister in a Government against which the Pope declared war, and himself one whose deadly, clear-headed reason did more to bring about Dis-establishment than the passions of unphilosophical atheists, speaking among the Chouans, descendants of the " Blancs," himself grandson of a " Bleu " ; the renegade Vendéen painting in charming words to the faithful, who have clung to the soil as to the faiths of their country, the cornfields and soft skies and green marshes of their own Vendée, and

the lover of those marshes, skies, and fields then breaking away to talk the blasphemous gospel of freedom, freedom from their old faiths, and to tell them with cruel kindliness that in time they also will learn what he has learnt—free thought ; old Chouans shaking hands with him for the sake of the Vendée, pious old Vendéennes bringing flowers to the impious son, because he is a son of their soil : picturesque moments which M. Clemenceau must have enjoyed as an artist.

“ You can always tell an article of Jaurès’ because every verb is in the future tense.” M. Clemenceau is always in the present. He is nothing if not a realist. Theories, scruples, policy are thrown to the winds for one interesting fact ; he may be suspected of finding each moment in his own life the most interesting fact going. Possibly he is picturesque not because he tries to be, but because, an artist of life, to his own self at least he is true. He has been Premier—and while he was, we thought, perhaps we hoped : “ He will be dropping politics suddenly to dive into his Odyssey again, or running off to have a look once more at the Parthenon, because for the moment he felt that way.” Did not the man seem to be pictured in two most characteristic Clemençalisms, heard in his Var constituency on October 14th, 1906 ? “ The function of public men is secondary, and is merely to construe into acts more or less well adapted to the general state of minds social truths brought by thinkers out of the chaos of human motions . . . . . A stick floating on water, a Minister is nothing at all, I can tell you, or next to nothing . . . . You can never thank us too much that we do not more harm than we do.”

Alas, he did not drop politics, they dropped him ; it was not because “ he felt that way ” that he went the way of all

Prime Ministers ; he did not remember that a Minister is “a stick floating on water,” and he thought that he alone of all Prime Ministers was an institution ; he did not trip out, he blundered out : for once he was not picturesque.



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## IX. *The Second Fall of Georges Clemenceau*

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### I

**T**HOSE who admired the fall and rise of M. Clemenceau were disappointed by his second fall. We knew that he would not fall in a great cause, and we were glad that he did not fall in any such sham great one as might very well have overthrown a man of his brains. But we had hoped he would fall with intelligence and picturesqueness. He should have thrown himself with a quip, and a knife thrust at men of middle sense, sneering, "You don't understand. I have thought down to your level all this while. Now I leave you. Good-bye. Chew the cud well." Or he could have walked out because he had enough of it: "I have made myself a motley to the view. I am tired of playing it. Find another clown." In fact, we had pictured for M. Clemenceau a telling exit and a good curtain. He should not have lamely slipped, the man who rose as he did: the strong man of opposition, who threw Cabinet after Cabinet with his little finger, thrown himself by stupid calumny,—stupider because it invented where it might have found some truth to go upon, but not less deadly for that,—pelted with rotten eggs and politically killed; then, not bounding on some similar popular wave, but working with brain and will up again; forcing himself steadily upon thinking men, who had ignored Clemenceau the Cabinet killer, but awoke delighted to the fresh Clemenceau; proving amazingly

in a book or two that, all the while he had been making politics and living on the boulevards, he had thought also ; thus coming back to popularity through the brains of the nation, a rare return ; and at last, after his marvellous Dreyfus campaign, and a brilliant outburst of patriotism when France having kicked out Delcassé most needed consolation, coming to power borne up as well by the men who think as by those who vote : a fall and a rise perhaps unprecedented, a fine drama.

As it was, he slipped—because he slipped. He thought his foot was sure, and he tumbled when he least expected it. Had he run for a fall we would have cheered him ; had he invited a throw from that other well-flung French politician, M. Delcassé, there would have been sport in the wrestle, and he would have fallen game. But what was so flat in it all was that he never at all meant it.

This time his eye for human drama seems for once to have failed him ; he did not see that together Delcassé and he—he at the height after such a rise, Delcassé rising from what a fall !—were a fact of life worth all the reforms which his Administration never brought off—he of all men born to feel such picturesqueness : Delcassé facing Clemenceau, the one hoisting himself up from the pit into which a country in a funk had flung him, the other at the top, having pulled himself up thither from an abyss of popular spite.

He never saw it at all. He took M. Delcassé merely for the little, eye-glassed, persistent, voraciously ambitious, narrowly intelligent man he is, and never understood him to be, not a man at all, a little keen ferret of a man, but a symbol and a great sign. Of all men, one thought M. Clemenceau would have understood. But he went for M. Delcassé as if he had been merely the burrowing quiet schemer of a rival which he of course was, and not feeling

that he was more, that he is almost a nonentity, but wrapped in tragedy, that his name stands, not for himself, but for a moment of French history. A Carlyle should brush and slash out the picture of that moment and the portrait of M. Delcassé who exists only because of it.

M. Clemenceau's imagination for once was dull, and he answered merely the man Monsieur Delcassé. He answered him, and drew the tragedy about his ears. He thought only of his patient rival who had slowly wormed his way up through a long standing Naval Reform Committee with a heavy task before it, and had come out at last on top, peering down upon the Government benches from the tribune and from the perch of a critic crowing over the writhing body of Admiralty red tape, long since unanimously condemned to death however hard to kill. He only lost his temper to see the man whom he knew to have been long stealthily dogging him, to catch him tripping and to step into his shoes, championing unfairly against him a cause which he could have just as fairly championed himself—but did he always in his wrestling days throw Cabinets by fair means?—and playing the disingenuous game of party politics—which he himself had played so often and with such skilful disingenuousness. He was annoyed to see a lesser man climb vindictively and ravenously up to him, and he thought to tweak him down with a snap of the fingers, then kill him with one thrust. He forgot how much Delcassé meant as a sign, though meaning little by himself, and his imagination suddenly failed to see himself and Delcassé as others saw them. The picture flamed up before the House, there was an instant of tragedy, and the essence of the tragedy was that Clemenceau seemed blind as a wall to it. Delcassé, hounded out of the Foreign Office which had almost become his property in the summer of 1905 and kicked as he lay

by every politician running by and away from the German boot, now after long patient inch-by-inch climbing almost up again and against Clemenceau, face to face ; Clemenceau at an insolent height of power reached after a longer and rockier climb from an earlier headlong flinging in a shower of curses and charges of corruption that crush a man like stones, now facing Delcassé's long-planned front attack, but parrying it wildly, as if he remembered nothing and had nothing learnt. The past of the two men was in every mind and made the duel tragic, but Clemenceau understood nothing, saw nothing that went on in other minds. His own past he might have forgotten, and yet carried the day ; Delcassé's should have haunted him as it haunted the House and haunts every reflecting Frenchman. Facing Delcassé he should have pinched himself every moment and said, " Let me not forget what this man stands for, let me not touch upon it more heavily than upon a live coal, there is fire in this." He walked straight at the bars and seemed surprised because he burnt himself. The House watched him going with amazement. " Does not the man understand ?" it thought. " Does not he feel how the whole old bitter history is tasting stale and more bitter in our mouths and will turn us up ? Does not he see himself and what he is doing as we do ? Of all men he should have read us with a look, should have imagined the tragedy of such a moment before it happened. But he goes blundering on—he, Clemenceau, blundering like a boor—and he does not see that the instinct is rising in us and that in five seconds we shall start up and rend him." He saw nothing, and seeing but the man Delcassé used against the latter's ambitions a weapon of which in a saner moment he would have felt, because of the thing the name Delcassé stood for, the deadly double edge. " This man wants my place. Why should he have it ? He humbled France, I did not." It

was not much more than that, but enough. It was enough to kill Clemenceau. The fall of M. Delcassé ! Did Clemenceau really not understand ? Had he then really never understood ? He had not been the worst at kicking Delcassé, but the worst kick then was not quite as bad as this kick at his country four years after.

## II

Did three years of office spoil M. Clemenceau's imagination ? His administration achieved probably no more than any other administration, but few do ; it was reviled perhaps more than any other administration, still many others run it close ; the most serious thing is that it was often inartistic. Though it deserves the credit of having smoothed over the first years of Disestablishment which were to have rent and ruined France and have left her as whole and as alive, and the Church as powerful, as ever, it brought in no great reform, but to do that is a rare privilege of Governments. It was hated honestly as well as dishonestly by many enemies, but these, according to rule, alternately attacked it for being "reactionary" or denounced it for "Anarchism," or joined, which is also in the rules of the game, in cursing it for having done the things which they would have done had they been in power. The really grievous thing is that M. Clemenceau's Government was not always as picturesque as it might have been. He began freshly enough as Home Secretary : he rushed down to the black country to parley with supposed Anarchists held to be exceedingly dangerous, after the Courrières catastrophe ; as an effective opening to a Parliamentary session, he took M. Jaurès by the horns, and instead of dodging him, as had every other statesman in office, gave



him back for one of his torrent-like apologies of Socialism and the City of the Future, a ruthlessly critical justification of the Present and of Individualism, raising Parliamentary debates to a level seldom reached; he crystallized Dis-establishment and the quarrels of Church and State with one another in a phrase which in the popular mind summed up for ever the whole question, for that "Me minister" will have to be applied to himself by each of M. Clemenceau's successors. The picturesqueness of that Clemenceau seems now to belong to a time when he was much more than three or four years younger. He was seldom again as picturesque. He discovered four or five Royalist or Anarchist or Popish plots, and a month after each was forgotten could not have told you himself which charge of sedition had fitted which plot, all having been dropped with calm unconcern; he expelled at one moment right and left, the semi-official Papal Nuncio, for instance, Monsignore Montagnini, whose conspiring never seems to have gone beyond eating good dinners with Royalist ladies who look confidently to the Vatican to bring the d'Orléans back to France, or to the d'Orléans to reinstate the Pope in Rome. In half a dozen labour agitations he contradicted his own principles as a man, contradicted his own policy as Premier, and complicated his contradictions by erratic returns to principles and policies which he had just before stultified. He pandered to revolution scares so unblushingly that one wondered for whom he was working. Did he fill Paris, empty of Revolutionists, with horse and artillery, and turn the town into an armed camp, to persuade the bourgeoisie that the bogey was real and that he was the strong man needed to save France? Did he exaggerate the social peril and the power of those who caused it, to play into their hands, that he might eventually find support from them, if the bourgeoisie should definitely

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drop him to go over to Reaction ? Did he come out armed to the teeth against anti-Parliamentary Socialism, now dragging the Unified Socialism of Parliament in its train, to let the Socialist parties see that though they might very well find it to their advantage to treat with him, it was certainly not going to pay them to split with him ? “ You don’t know what you lose [perhaps his message was meant to run] by not being nice with me. As it is, I am going to smash your open-air meetings and processions (freedom for which I always of course advocated vehemently before I took office) much more shortly and sharply than any of my predecessors did. See if I don’t.” And he did. The only discernible principle of the Clemenceau policy in labour agitation was to let it have its head, if not whip it up, until it kicked the shafts to pieces, then to pull it in viciously and thrash it. No other rule of government appeared in M. Clemenceau’s handling of the agitation which produced riots at Draveil Vigneux and Villeneuve St. Georges in June and July, 1908, and after which he had the leaders of the C.G.T. arrested on charges of conspiracy, dropped later, as usual, and forgotten, and of the two postal strikes of March and May, 1909, his treatment of which was particularly typical. In March, bland *laissez-faire* ; in May, when everybody knew that the strike was a foregone failure, a tremendous clenched-fist policy and a facile victory. In May the hopelessness of the strike and the certainty of Government victory was so obvious that the particular set of Paris politicians which is more observant than active and which delights in interpreting in terms of dark Machiavellism the perhaps simpler events unfolded before them, swore that Clemenceau had himself set up the strike to knock it down. At least it is quite possible that he did nothing to stop the second agitation in the beginning, knowing that it could be but a house of cards

which he could triumphantly kick over, with great glory and no damage to himself.

As early as in the drama of wine and politics, during the first twelve months of his administration, in the spring of 1907, he seemed to have shaped to his own satisfaction his policy of alternate laxity and violence. Yet he seized one dramatic opportunity like an artist. Marcelin Albert, the lean and feverish prophet of the rebellious south, for whom a hundred thousand peasants would have given their lives, slipped up to Paris by the night train and walked in the morning from the Gare d'Orsay to the Ministry of the Interior. Another Home Secretary and Prime Minister might have weighed pros and cons. M. Clemenceau had him shown in, and Premier and Prophet remained closeted an hour. That was like the old Clemenceau, thirsting for realities and real men. One pictured the sallow, bright-eyed Prime Minister looking into the vague, fixed eyes of the Prophet, to find what the elements were of a man who, raw and untaught, led thousands of men. It was also like Clemenceau to ask Marcelin Albert how his purse stood and to lend him a hundred francs. Poor, candid, innocent Prophet Marcelin took the £4. One thought then of the bright, knowing eyes looking into the Prophet's innocent face, and as they looked, gleaming to know he was ruined with those who would have died for him. £4 from Clemenceau ! It was cruel—but it was picturesque. It was fair after all ; never let us quarrel with the statesman who, finding the chance, takes it, even inhumanly.

### III

"We are in incoherency," said M. Clemenceau in the early months of his administration, during a debate on Church and State, vexing M. Briand thereby nearly into resigning, and the phrase stuck. Perhaps M. Clemenceau prophetically judged his own administration. His administration could scarcely be called an Administration at all. In all respects but one it was a great game, which by the chief players was tremendously enjoyed, perhaps only moderately by the others. M. Clemenceau in power cared for only two things, and one was power. That was no great originality in him, but the size of his appetite and the means by which he gratified it were almost new and remarkable. During his administration, it was his deliberate purpose and consistent practice to take no interest whatever in any but two departments of his Cabinet, the Home and Foreign Offices, and to give heed to the former solely in so far as he could feed his love of power upon it. Not only did he profess cheery ignorance of Finance, Law, Public Works, Agriculture, but in Home politics he cared for the means, not the end, for the methods, not the politics: it was no internal policy, but a Home ferule that amused him. The twenty years' champion, before he took office, of decentralized government and of autonomous authorities within a State weakened at the head but organically stronger, he derived his utmost satisfaction during his three years and four months' tenure of the Home Office and two years and nine months of Premiership from the determined reinforcement of central command at the expense of the body politic. No other Minister ever ruled the Ministry of the Interior with such an iron hand, and none ever drew so

tightly the marvellous network of administrative control through Prefects and Sub-Prefects invented by Napoleon. No other country in the world possesses such complete and finished, such flexible and strong machinery of State domination, and M. Clemenceau used it for all it is safely worth. In spite of centralized Government, France has considerable habits of freedom, and the machinery of despotism may not be worked in its full power without risk from the temper of the country. It would be an ideal instrument for the German Empire, where it could be made the most of. M. Clemenceau in France could not use it to the utmost, but he sailed very near the wind. Prefects, each of whom is in practice governor of his Department, little hampered by the Council General, which "emits wishes," are appointed directly by and answerable only to the Home Office; they are so many—82—fingers of one hand, the Ministry of the Interior. They are invulnerable to direct public censure or pressure, and the only method by which the nation can take action against a Prefect backed by his Minister is by a vote of censure upon the Cabinet in Parliament. Their power is even more practical than theoretical. With wide-spreading legal authority, reaching through the Sub-Prefects and battalions of minor officials down even to some of the smallest details of borough and village life, they unite overwhelming political influence, being the very ears of the Minister, through which alone he listens to what the nation is supposed to be saying and thinking, in each town and hamlet, trusting only them and on principle never heeding other informants; not least, in a country where social custom counts for much more than the shifting surface of fleeting legal forms, they enjoy great social prestige everywhere, except in small knots of irreducible Royalists, who of course scoff at the Prefect not at all because he is a



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Prefect, but because he is a Prefect of the Republic, and who would outdo all others in bowing to him, were he a Prefect of a Monarchical or Imperial Government. The rooted strength of Napoleon's machinery of centralized government has no exact equivalent in any other country. M. Clemenceau's handling of the instrument was masterly.

It may easily be imagined what can be made of the Prefectoral system by an overriding Minister of the Interior. A timid one may be the tool of his Prefects ; M. Clemenceau's Prefects were blind, dumb, and deaf tools in his hands. While he lorded it over his Cabinet, shutting this and that colleague up, deriding them in public and stinging them with insolent sallies, like the nickname, "calf in a china shop," which he adapted from the anglicism for an Under-Secretary of State whom it happened to fit rather well, he cowed his battalions of the Interior. A Prefect used to playing his own game in his chief town soon lost that habit. M. Clemenceau would telephone him up to Paris by the night express, and after a ten minutes' talking to, send him down back by the next day one. No Prefect, or even Sub-Prefect, for he would often deal directly with subordinates, knew a day's or night's peace under M. Clemenceau. He might always be at one end of the telephone wire, and they were expected always to be at the other. The Prefectoral system was a machine of which he pulled every separate wire immediately from his study. But he not only worked the machine, he also depended upon it. The former champion of fair and free play, he slid into the practice of a cramped and onesided scrutiny of the nation. He made the common mistake of French statesmen in office, into which it was extraordinary that he should fall, and into which he fell more thoroughly

than any of his predecessors, of drawing a fence round officialdom and building "functionarism" into a fortress from which he surveyed the nation. That peculiarly French policy of Government, which he, who had always in theory leant to the other extreme of British *laissez aller*, brought to perfection, holds civil servants to be, not functions in an organized nation, but the only organs in an indefinite inorganic national mass, and rules by dividing the one from the other. M. Clemenceau carried to an extreme this method of government by division; after spasmodic endeavours to get into touch with the nation, he gave up the attempt and fortified himself in his Home Office, with his spider's web of telephone threads having a Prefect at every end. Such a policy of aloofness seems amazing; it is still more remarkable that M. Clemenceau should have so thoroughly carried it out. After a few months of office he ceased to know France except through his official feelers. In a dozen circumstances, he trusted only to his telephone wires to know the spirit of the nation, he hung upon the receiver, asked, what does Bordeaux? what does Lyons? what does Lille think? and took a shivering Prefect's report for gospel. One can imagine how impartially a Prefect would report to a martinet-Minister. One of M. Clemenceau's achievements in office was to perfect within the State a State trained in perpetual antagonism towards the larger State, for the greater glory of the junta ruling the whole. M. Clemenceau's administration at home was a game he played for its own sake. The wire-pulling of his eighty-two puppets in Prefectures and some four hundred in sub-Prefectures was perhaps his chief amusement. He cannot himself have honestly supposed that not to take the trouble when he came to power of elaborating any other method of government than a brazen exaggeration of the very system which he had

always been the first to condemn out of office was serious statesmanship.

#### IV

Yet he did not always and entirely make a game of government. The Place Beauvau and its telephone wires with a Prefect dangling at every far end were his pastime ; the Quai d'Orsay just across the Seine was perhaps the only place of Government which he took seriously. Contradictory, hedging, time-serving, giving the lie to his own professions, he yet was not always incoherent. In November, 1908, Germany suddenly demanded an apology for the Casablanca affray of two months before. M. Clemenceau's Government answered that it would give no apology. Very well, said Germany, then we won't ask for one any more. That was all, but it was a great deal. When Kaiser Wilhelm landed at Tangier on the last day of March, 1905, he said, Dismiss Delcassé, and dismissed Delcassé was in June. In November, 1908, France retrieved June, 1905, and at her retrieval it was Clemenceau who spoke for her. That is a thing that speaks for Clemenceau. In November, 1908, he had all France behind him, but he also stood for France. He was indeed, though not in his usual way, picturesque then ; he was quite quiet and unepigrammatic, he merely was the spokesman of his country, and his country and he knew it. France hereafter will forgive him much incoherence for that moment of simplicity. It seems the more astonishing that he should have fallen dully, because facing Delcassé who was sacrificed in 1905, he through whom in 1908 France retrieved 1905 did not understand what he and Delcassé meant, and that the scapegoat of humiliation should have been sacred to him, the instru-

ment of redemption. But a blindness of the twelfth hour should not wipe out the clear and true-sightedness of the eleventh. The Clemenceau administration, if it be remembered, will be known as that which governed France in November, 1908.

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## X. *In the Black Country : Courrières*

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EVERYTHING seemed dumb and without colour in that tragic country when I reached it after the disaster, not a sound anywhere, and everything drab. Lens stretched its rows of dull brick houses. Its *Grand' Place* tried to be Flemish round the ugliest imitation Renaissance church ever built. The black, bleak waste of the *Place de la République* spread out endlessly from a line of gloomy houses to a coalblack canal. Then, the drive through the mining villages, all of dirty red brick cottages built on exactly the same plan, with their only saving grace in tiny gardens which had not long ago been trimmed and weeded. All the "corons," as the miners' villages are called, are a dirty brown under the leaden sky, and all are silent. Through Sallaumines, Méricourt, and Billy-Montigny, past pits four, three, and two, at the bottom of which the dead lie in heaps, and still the same horrible silence. Black crosses—two sticks roughly nailed one to the other and daubed with pitch—hang on every other house. Here and there a door is ajar, and one sees women in bare rooms rocking themselves slowly from side to side, without a sound. Children in black whisper among themselves. Then, at the end of the most depressing drive anyone ever took, the pit-yard and the charnel-house. This sight is too horrible to be touching. The survivors peer carefully at indescribably distorted bodies. There is hardly a cry, even when a boy finds his father dead, a woman her man. The bodies in deal coffins lie in a shed. Everything is mean and grim, and still horribly silent. Only now and



then a shriek splits the deadly silence, and one almost welcomes it. A rough, uncouth woman's grief has burst suddenly out into a frenzy, and she has to be torn away, clinging like an infuriated beast to her dead young. Then silence again, and back through the village, dead and tragically still.

The second impression, when I recall it now, seems like a vision—a vision at first of nothing but whiteness. The snow fell so thickly that an opaque white sheet hung before one's eyes. Out of the whiteness now and then emerged black forms in long cloaks huddled against the storm, all trooping in one direction. Across more distant fields black dots appeared in rents torn in the white sheet, swarms of black dots, all hurrying towards the pits. The silence was more impressive than ever, as the snow fell softly for hours. It was almost an unreal scene, this scene of death and white peace everywhere. At the gates of two of the pit yards the crowd, all in black, snow lying like thick white fur on their heads and shoulders, pressed silently. Within, scores of yellow deal coffins lay on trestles under an iron-roofed shed. The mourners clung round the coffins closely till these were lost to sight. It was still an intolerably silent scene. More biers were brought, the lids covered with snow, more mourners filed in. The first sound that broke the silence after half an hour was a mad laugh from a widow hysterical with grief. Most of the other women sobbed low to themselves, or came up to you whispering incoherent tales of their dead sons. At No. 3 pit, the Minister of the Interior, the Bishop, the Prefect and a swarm of officials attended the funerals. The Bishop was unctuous, the Minister happily tempered his oratory, and his best eloquence was in his eyes, when he broke down and cried. Oratory awoke mourners from mute to demonstrative sorrow. Funeral services and speeches were accompanied throughout by a

threnody of women's wailing which, beginning low, rose to shrieks. Then, the procession through the snow to the common grave dug in a field; the crowd of officials and mining folk in such confusion that one knocked up against coffins; and the burial in the trench full of snow. More speeches, but no unctuousness this time—fierce fury against the company, against the “capitalists,” the miners, who, with hat and lamp, had carried the biers, growling assent, and poor M. le Préfet, in his black and gold-braided uniform, feverishly trying to get the people away that the denunciatory trade union delegate might be left speaking in a wilderness.

Back to Lens, away from the terrible odour of death, the sound of wailing women and the fury of men—back to the town and whatever it may provide. It gives the miner weird diversions from the weary grimness of his life. Two rival “concerts” vie to charm him from seven to eleven of an evening. In one of them, which has ambitions, two enormously stout ladies with very thin voices warble. I preferred the other which has no pretensions and is nearer to the rank simplicity and ingenuous licence of these men of the earth and the coal seam. The people who run the place have no suspicion how exquisitely strange they are. Miners sit on wooden benches round a low room drinking three-halfpenny “chopes” of watery beer, and the company in turn sings to them hideous songs. The star, poor girl, is nineteen, depraved and guileless. The second star is not quite sane, laughs constantly, with a wild look in her eyes, wears ball dresses fashioned by her own hand which make one feel like to cry, and sings terribly. The “comic,” almost a skeleton, with large dabs of rouge on cheeks and nose, is a weaver from Roubaix who took to art a year or two back. He puts on his comic nose or Englishman's side whiskers in a cupboard, on the front panel of which is painted a

mediæval castle in the very far distance, just above the piano which is backed against the cloth. The comic's great scene—given only on Sundays, when miners come early in numbers and stay till closing time—is the “confession.” He does the priest, in white surplice to heighten the colour, and his wife the penitent, confessing in innuendoes, while he wriggles with pleased shame. The scene would never be allowed in Paris. The comic's wife—poor thing!—ought to be looking carefully after a respectable, modest home. That is her dream. Their little girl sings risky songs with an angelic face. Between turns, the comic asks for news of the Algeciras Conference which preoccupies him incessantly. The eldest daughter of the landlord is a perfect Madonna, with the beautiful oval of her face, when her liquid dark eyes look at her baby son, as she gives him beer, cognac, or bitters to sip, or a fried potato to munch from the street travelling stall. Another daughter, beneath the beautiful hair, shading from *blond cendré* to pure gold, which so many women have in this country, has a wise woman's face—in which many things are read, until the girl of fourteen begins to talk, and talk like a child, for all her upbringing in the midst of this ingenuous vice. The poor, pathetic concert goes on, the stars pass a cockleshell round, making about a shilling of an evening, while the comic family can count upon four shillings for the three of them, until at eleven the policeman taps at the window. Closing time, and the signal for friends of the family to withdraw into the back kitchen and drink apple-wine champagne, while the stars tell their ingenuously wicked stories, the comic thirsts for information on the *haute politique*, the daughter with the enigmatically wise face, who keeps all the accounts, calls for forfeits and baby games, papa, who never does a thing but lets his family do everything, sits smoking his clay by the red-hot kitchen range, and mamma smiles placidly. It appears

that in this strange town of Lens every café—and every house has its café—has just such a back kitchen. I despair of making clear with what rough and winning comradeship one is welcomed in those back kitchens. I have been all over France, in out-of-the-way corners, but there is only one Lens. I leave real friends there. The merest gentleness of manner wins these rough people. Their own language is frightful. Talking innocently of innocent things, they use terrible oaths. Speak to them with the slightest shade of kindness and deference, and they love you. They are lovable themselves, though morally they are dumb, primitive creatures. Widows of miners lost in the catastrophe were, many of them, consoled by survivors before their husband's bodies had been recovered from the deadly pits. But when their husbands were at last buried, there was nothing feigned in their wild grief. One widow I noticed sobbing as if her heart would break, and stopping only to curse the engineers who had murdered her husband. "My corporal," said a lieutenant of gendarmes, "found that stricken widow none too cruel."

After this comedy, thick melodrama : the descent to the bottom of the burning pit is a sensation recommended to the jaded. It is literally a burning pit, and the fire, they say, may go on there for thirty or forty years more. No extinguishing apparatus has so far had the slightest effect upon it. I went down with the Paris *pompier*s, who had never been in a mine before, but were naturally used to fire. There was little that one could remember of the first part of the journey, save a breathless scramble in galleries two feet high, through pools of coal-black ooze a foot deep, past caverns where the smell of carrion was unbearable, over horrible, soft, yielding piles of cloths, under which there was one does not like to think what. The *pompier* would not say, and urged us along, running or crawling, and nearly



splitting our heads against the roof. Don't lean too heavily against that wooden prop, was the advice now and then. The prop supports the roof, and if it gave way we should be buried, so we lean lightly and hurry on. It is getting hotter and hotter as the *pompier* hastens us, and I feel like Alice Through the Looking-glass when the Red Queen said, "Faster and faster." One's mind becomes a total blank in this heat, and one rushes on blindly. We are near the fire now. Two minutes' rest, for heaven's sake, and we sink down in the burning mud. Then on again, and we are next to a heavy mass of wet cloths hanging on a string. This keeps the heat away to a certain extent from the other galleries. We draw the curtains and are in a furnace. A glimmer from our lamps is all the light, but behind the black walls of coal we hear the fire burning brightly—happily crackling away, like a good, honest fire on an honest, homely hearth. Hose play upon it incessantly, but only liven it up. There are 32 mètres broad of it, and eight or nine hundred bodies, out of the twelve hundred men whom it has slain, still lie around us. But the only thing I can think of next to the fire is that, if I remain, my head will burst. It is a strange sensation, but not one to be long enjoyed. We are soon on the safe side of the wet cloths again, and hurtling back through the galleries like mole-holes, to air and sunshine again.

Thirteen men lived twenty, and a fourteenth twenty-five, days in that hell. That is the most dramatic episode in this tragedy of the earth. One grew used to looking at the dead. When I saw the living recovered from the dead, I suddenly found myself wet-eyed. No man could look coolly at the mothers feeding their eyes on their poor, lean sons, just brought up from three weeks of darkness in a living grave. Fortunately, Nény, the Barnum of the thirteen, saved us from overwhelming pathos. He has the



Cross of the Legion of Honour, but he ought also to have a few thousand a year from an American music-hall as advertising agent. To see him negotiating business terms with impresarii, strange journalists, bioscope managers, and signing picture postcards furiously at the rate of five a second for admirers, was a lesson in the art of getting on. Nény is only a miner, but he is a miner from the "Midi," that is his secret.

My last impression of this tragic country is that of a poem of sublime fury. As I drove up to the gates of one of the pits, an old hag sprang at me, shook her fist under my nose, shrieking, "Who are you? Are you a friend of Bavaur?" I hastened to disown any acquaintance with the Courrières Company manager. "Are you in league with the murderers?" I said I certainly was not. But entrance was impossible. "If any, journalists or no, are let in, we storm the gates," the crowd howled. "Our dead sons are there; we, if any, have a right to enter." I could not help agreeing, and at last entered only after stratagems and by skirting the furious crowds for several miles. Within the pit-yard, where the fourteenth man who had spent twenty-five days below had just been recovered, a thousand women were howling like furies. As this pit had been blocked up for over three weeks by order of the engineers, and as the latter had with difficulty been restrained from flooding the mine, popular anger could hardly be blamed. I saw two or three engineers and one priest run the gauntlet of the mad women. They were white and showed funk, but bore it pluckily on the whole. The women closed round them like wolves. I thought all was over with them. But they were only a little scratched and ran in time to cover. The priest was peculiarly unattractive, with oily black ringlets round a sallow face. He was in no way responsible, of course, for the catastrophe, but these mining folk, while religiously

making the sign of the cross when the crucifix is borne by at a funeral, hate priests. The Courrières and other companies are extremely Catholic, the chief shareholders being pillars of the Roman Catholic political church party in France. In certain villages which I visited a sort of censorship has long been exercised over the miners. A man reading a Radical newspaper soon loses his job, for the warder of the "coron" is there to report. Perhaps this explains that strange confession scene in the Lens concert.

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## *XI. In the White Country: Lourdes*

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**E**MILE ZOËA and Joris Karl Huysmans have described Lourdes, but the picture is not finished yet, if it ever can be. One comes away from a day at Lourdes amazed, dazed, and horror-stricken. I saw no miracle, but the certainty of one would not draw me to Lourdes again. It must be a callous and a blank soul that can dwell in the place. A few hours of it almost terrify anyone who feels and thinks. The most sceptical approach it with some reverence, and come away in pain; one goes with an open heart, ready to take in any impression of piety, however primitive, however childish, and comes away with the heart empty: one hungered there for a crumb and there was not one. Not one touch of faith that thrilled, though the sceptic went to Lourdes perhaps more receptive than the faithful; not one moment to stir the common religiousness of all men: only one instant that moved deeply, and that was with purely human pity.

A street of penny-bazaar-like shops leads from the town to the Basilica of Lourdes on a slight hill. The bazaars, a hundred of them, owned (it is said) chiefly by Jews, sell pious mementoes. Piety here fosters ugliness. Many picture postcards in other tourists' haunts give adequately (if the coloured kind be avoided) bits of landscape, a mountain scene, the view, or details, of a lovable old church. Lourdes has not even a picture postcard worth buying. The most fervent believer with a scruple of taste could not buy a single one of these pious mementoes. If a person most dear

to us had been cured by a Lourdes miracle, it would still be a heavy penance to carry off an "illuminated Virgin warranted to light up," a reduction of the statue opposite the Basilica. Statuettes, images, pictures, trinkets induce the conviction that those who give orders for Lourdes objects of piety (and for all modern church ornaments in France) resolutely and carefully suppress any faint trace of good taste when they see it, and with single-minded persistence cultivate squalid, vulgar, and inane ugliness. Not a child's toy of to-day but has more art in it than the pious mementoes of Lourdes. One runs the gauntlet of these saddening bazaars before approaching the Basilica. Dreadful waxen figures, from an inch or two high to life-size, painted with unbelievable crudeness, and heart-rending chromos pursue you; tin cans of all sizes, all of the same oval shape, that of the French trooper's campaigning cans, and all coloured the same sky-blue with clumsy designs, hang from nails at shop windows, waiting to be filled with Lourdes water by pilgrims, and every shop advertises "Lourdes lozenges," made with Lourdes water. The street of bazaars does not prepare the mind for devotion.

Yet were one to come straight in view of the Shrine of Lourdes from the glades and brooks of the Pyrenees around, the first impression would perhaps be worse. In a bare, dusty, and sandy square garden stands a monument of granite erected as a token of gratitude by Breton piety; a clumsy hand has sculptured it without accent and without an energetic line, and it might have been shaped with a slovenly touch out of soft mould. At the gates of the garden old women, mournfully draped in black cloth from cloaked head to foot, sit silently all day selling coloured wax candles, and men hawk bundles of vanilla. At the far end of the garden an immense statue of the Virgin

turns her back to the oncoming visitor. One walks on and turns to look, and finds that the Brittany monument was a strong work by comparison. The face of the figure is vacant and meaningless, and expresses nothing but a sugary, washed-out, flabby ineptitude. It is horrible to think of thousands worshipping at the foot of this monument of vulgar senselessness. One cannot rightly say that if it do no good it does no harm. Four women, as I stand by, kneel in the gravel, face in hands, humbly prostrate before the atrocious figure. It must hurt minds to associate that face, beside which the dulllest human living face is bright and endlessly meaning, with divinity, and to worship stupidity in a statue. Who was guilty of the monument ? Let us hope he was as inane as his work ; if not, he was criminal. The statue casts a premonitory horror over the visitor. It is wound round with strings of coloured electric bulbs, lit up at night.

The Basilica, theatrically upraised over the grotto, on a platform to which a huge horseshoe staircase leads ; two churches piled one on the other, the Basilica on the Church of the Rosary, with a terrace, at the top of the steps, severing them : the whole an amazing monument of garish, ill-proportioned, absurd architecture, not even barbaric, hardly even degenerate—for from what could it have degenerated ? Look at it, and wonder. What does it mean ? It expresses only one thing : the determined purpose to appeal to the worst taste by the cheapest means. The huge stone staircase built in a ridiculously awkward curve is cheap grandeur for the helplessly untrained eye ; the brutal gilding and shrieking mosaics are to seem rich to the poor in knowledge of beauty ; such details as completely useless pillars, on the platform at the top of the steps, shaped like piles of miniature sham embattled towers, given a corkscrew twist by an added devilry of vicious taste,



are meant for ornaments to capture pathetically ignorant admiration.

From the lower church go round the corner to your left and come suddenly, unprepared, on such a scene of half-consciously sordid tragedy as no other place in the world can show. A crowd, a dull crowd with blank faces, lines a railing marking off an open square against a wall with two doors. The crowd does not seem to speak, but one hears it strangely murmuring. Within the square stand six surpliced priests in a row. One calls in a loud expressionless voice, "Dear Virgin, heal our sick. Beloved Virgin, you can do it if you will. Mother of God, we implore you. Heal our sick. If you will, you can do it." The crowd repeats in a monotone, "Heal our sick." Another priest takes it up, "Holy Virgin, you are blessed and the fruit of your bowels is blessed." The same colourless voice from the priest and the same monotone chorus from the crowd. Recovered from the first strange impression one looks closer and sees within the railings beyond the crowd huddled shapes in bath-chairs, silent and still figures sitting in rows, pain in some faces, but in most no expression at all. The priests in turn go on calling. They neither cry nor chant nor speak; they call as one would call the most trivial message across a distance of a hundred yards or so. One might feel that Heaven is not far, but one does not: one feels further than ever from Heaven. The priests go on imperturbably. One (who has led hither a pilgrimage from Rouen) is stout, imposing, with a large fleshy face, a thick arched nose, and a fat chin. He is handsome, but subtly unpleasant. The features are fine, but dulled by overgrown flesh, and the eye is shifty. The voice is worse, and each sound of it jars in one's head, a terribly bland and callous voice, a voice that might be saying, "How d'ye do?" and is calling on the Mother of God, a voice I hear still now

when I think of Lourdes. The imposing priest is blown, and a thin and withered old priest takes up the call, "Blessed Virgin, heal our sick. You can, if you will, Mother of God. . . ." His face is more sympathetic, a furrowed face that has suffered, but he puts on a sugary voice which turns bitter in one's ear. At intervals the other priests repeat the spokesman's words. Attitudes are extraordinary. One bends his head on one side and shuts his eyes : he is doing it for the gallery. Another looks rapt and still does not convince. The spokesman priest calls, "Arms crosswise " (*les bras en croix*), and all stand with outstretched arms, still calling, now the same words, now the litanies to the Virgin, now the Lord's Prayer. The crowd follows suit, every man and woman stands with arms outstretched, repeating the Lord's Prayer, then calling, "Blessed Virgin, heal our sick," then litanies to the Virgin. One more priest steps forward from the row of six and takes up the call and the monotone goes on. Not a break of half a minute, not even a moment's rest : the same perpetual call of the priest's uninterested voice to the Virgin and the same dull chorus from the crowd. I looked into faces which were speaking the same short phrases of prayer over and over again rapidly, and tried to read them : not a sign of feeling, not a thrilling glance in any eye—all dull and drab matter-of-factness.

The sensation becomes horrible, one would go mad if one long gazed at those lack-lustre faces and listened to the perpetual dull echo.

In and out of the railed-off space three or four almost over-dressed youths—over-dressed in such surroundings !—and neat elderly gentlemen marshal the blind and the halt, women to the right of the onlooking public, men to the left. The wall opposite the crowd has two curtained doors leading to the men's and women's baths of miraculous

water. The sick are wheeled, carried, or led, up in batches, then wait their turn in the railed-off courtyard. A stout matter-of-fact doctor in a velvet skull-cap stands at the door of the baths. Matter-of-fact priests busy about. Everyone is matter-of-fact, and the impression overwhelming the fresh observer is that if real mysticism is to be found anywhere it is not here, and that the ecstasy of faith is the last thing anyone dreams here of feeling. It is all a business, practical and methodical. The one inscription seen on every wall in large letters is "Veillez à vos portemonnaie"—considerate but uninspiring. One watches the priests standing in the figure of the cross, perpetually repeating the same words in the same voice, the expressionless echoing crowd, the silent invalids, some half stupefied, some seemingly half dead—one looks away and reads "Beware of pickpockets"—the only words to be read on the walls. The priests go on calling, the crowd echoing, the sick are methodically taken in to the baths in turns, after hours of waiting. The one true miracle so far is the total absence of emotion. The onlooker stands as if in a dreamland. No one around him seems to feel anything. It might all be a long methodical ritual among passionless shades, the shades that have kept the semblance of men but know human joy and pain no more. He seems to himself the only living man among imperturbable ghosts and can hardly help shouting out, crying any word of human feeling to wake up this cold world of dead imaginations. He roams restlessly about looking for a face that shares his emotion and finds none. The priests go on calling calmly to Heaven, the crowd goes on echoing dully, the sick are taken in and brought out of the baths, and no one seems to have eyes to see, ears to hear, or a heart to feel. The sick lie patiently for hours on their backs on stretchers waiting their turn. Nearly all are dazed, some are im-

beciles, some are monstrosities, some were hale and lusty and have been struck down suddenly ; one once strong man lies on his back without moving a muscle, his face a grey-green, terrible to see ; two boys on their backs look so rosy and comfortable that they might (as a sceptical companion suggests to me) be sham invalids waiting to afford the safe chance of a certain miracle ; but the suspicion is unfounded, for no miracle is announced that day. The only true miracle is the whole scene of unnatural tragedy in which not one of the actors sees the tragedy. It unfolds itself in endless repetition and one can bear it no longer, when suddenly one divine touch of humanity clutches the heart. A poor, stout, homely, ugly *petite bourgeoise*, old to be the mother of a child of eight or nine, in her pathetic best Sunday dress, comes into the courtyard helping her thin, weak-legged boy to walk to the baths. She sees nothing but him and feels nothing but her love for the ill-grown, dull-looking boy. Her arm gently holds him, she bends over him rapt and fearful, watches every movement, and listens as he whispers. The stout and clumsy figure is all motherhood, a sublime statue of motherhood. A mother's love was never more tender nor more passionate. It seems to light up and inspire the whole scene suddenly. The visitor, wrought upon by hours of isolation in this petrified crowd, cannot keep the tears from his eyes, looking at the ungainly mother, exquisite in her tenderness, the only living soul there. She stands out from the crowd, a shining figure in the dark—she with her ugly boy. One can never forget it : the sudden stroke of emotion going to the heart after hours of searching in the dull crowd for a sign of feeling, till a mad desire to shout almost overcame one. Not another onlooker seems to notice the ungainly mother and her ugly boy, but the visitor now does not care. He has seen her and felt something which he will always prize,



and the tears in his eyes have eased him. Yet the divine which he sought at this shrine is still nowhere, the human only has been found : worth finding, indeed.

Screams of children, terrible to hear, come from the baths : no one heeds them, for the wretched children are being bathed for their souls' as well as their bodies' sakes. The priests go on calling unconcernedly on Heaven, the crowd calmly mumbling. The ugly mother clasps her boy more closely when she hears screams from the icy baths.

After four or five hours, during which the priests in relays have not stopped calling on the Virgin and the crowd has not ceased echoing them with no more emotion than they, at last the strange play ends and another begins. The sick are brought out in bath-chairs and on stretchers and formed accurately in two lines flanking the gravelled space opposite the Basilica. The healthy crowd stands close behind the rows of invalids and women squabble for places. A wait, the doors of the Basilica open, and the Host is borne out, first round to the grotto, then back up between the lines. The priest slowly walking raises the Host aloft, all kneel as it passes, the crowd repeats the same litanies with furious rapidity over and over again as fast as the words can come out. Another priest chants suddenly with a beautiful voice (in French), "I am the Resurrection and the Life" : it is the only emotional moment in the scene. The rest is blankness, and horrible dry dulness. The Host uplifted, the crowd prostrate : one should feel the symbols of sublimity and meekness, but one feels nothing. The expressionless faces of the crowd mean nothing to the eye, the voices droning with incessant unintelligence the same prayer fall dull on the ear. There never were minutes when one might have felt so much and when one felt so little. The sonorous voice chanting the romantic words give one sudden moment's thrill and that is all. The visitor leaves,



passes the flaccid Virgin with a shudder, the woolly Breton monument with a sigh, and runs the gauntlet of the wax taper-selling old women and the men with vanilla. Go to Lourdes as a sightseer only ; do not go with an open heart expecting religious emotion. Go in a train of jolly pilgrims who lark at every buffet where the train stops. Yet the ugly mother with her boy was exquisitely worth going to Lourdes to see.

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## XII. "*Les Jeunes*"

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### 1897—THE LITERARY PILGRIMAGE AND THE YOUTH'S PROGRESS \*

IN taking count of to-day it is possible to over-estimate the documentary value of yesterday; the clue to the man is not always furnished by his father, the child. But in the study of contemporary French ideas, the method that will best apply is that of a literary embryology. The French mind of to-day is elusive, yet it has so regularly evolved that the youth very accurately makes the man. Too often the man ceases to make himself. The literary life is based on a few wonderful years of early manhood. The way to know where the French man of letters has arrived is to begin

\* "*Les jeunes!*" They were a delightful moment of French life. It is past, and the "*jeunes*" are gone, and they went not merely as the raspberry tarts of Thackeray's youth faded away. Frenchmen can still be young, but the funny thing is that young Frenchmen are called no more "*les jeunes*." They are not young in the way they were young a dozen years ago. The ferment is there still, but it does not breed the same kinds of fever. Are the microbes of mental enthusiasms now more practical? Has the "*arriviste*" in arriving disturbed the "*jeunes*" of to-day who are no longer called "*jeunes*," and are intellectual wild oats now rather invested than spent? The youth's pilgrimage of a dozen years ago was nothing if not disinterested. Only a moment of French life is described here by one who was in it when he wrote; but it was a moment that is still perhaps worth remembering for half an hour. "*Les jeunes*" who went on that pilgrimage say they have no successors, not merely because they themselves are a dozen years older, but because young France of to-day has not carried on the torch, though it may have lit others.

by finding out how he arrived. In his country there is a fairly regular literary pilgrimage, and it is not difficult to trace the Youth's Progress. The man may be a failure ; the youth cannot be, while he has his staff and scrip. Besides, the great man's privilege of dozing has been so much extended since Homer's time that it often is only fair to suppose that the successful men of letters were more interesting with their travel-stains, in the stress and while the storm blew.

Indeed, a certain storminess is the charm of the literary pilgrimage. The Youth makes a tremendous start, and begins at the heroic stage. He is refreshingly intolerant and an exquisite zealot. The Philistine grows amusingly indignant with him, and the experienced and kindly are delightedly amused. For it is generous not to exclaim, “ A pose ! ” The Youth's impulse may work out into affectations, but it springs genuinely, and is so largely made up of the element of devotion that it must command some sympathies. It is the ungrudged expression of welcome influences, the reflection of a light that illumines the Youth's first steps. Only precise cavillers mind if the rays return distorted. The men and the causes the Youth burns to die for half the world cares too little about to attack. Yet the Youth's ill-adapted generosity is worth more than a sneer. To the right-minded it is a delight to see him enthusiastically drag the tail of his coat, and only mean spirits will tread on it ill-temperedly.

The period of flamboyant simplicity and simple-minded pose dates from the Youth's initiation. He hears for the first time what is the modern heroic cry in letters, and exults in echoing it. His pilgrimage begins with revelations which he burns to share with the world. The wonderful garden of letters is new : let all come and wonder with the novice at the fruits and the flowers in his hands. A primeval

appetite has prompted him to pluck those whose grand colour and rich perfume appealed most to his instinct. There is the splendid melancholy of Alfred de Vigny ; Baudelaire's strength ; the wilful art of Edgar Allan Poe ; Villiers de l'Isle Adam, whose insight goes deep, and whose thought soars to superb heights ; Barbey d'Aurévilly, heady and magnificent. He crushes them all into his cup with a boy's carelessness of mixing. Add some Hugo, imbued already into the child, a rather faint remembrance of Lamartine, a mere dash of Musset's *Nuits*, and the charm is made whole. No wonder heads of nineteen are turned and views of life are kaleidoscopic, if you consider how such a wine must work on sensitive brains. This is the magic of letters which makes thought a wanton. It flies to the ends of art and harks back to metaphysics, dallies with subtle artificialities and reverts to primitive passions, steeps in tragedy, plays with satire, and is in dead earnest all the while. In which lies its gain. Not the facts of a case or a philosophy, but its emotion and a mood, are the fruits of the Youth's first experience : a mind not yet provided with an aim, but already tempered to pursue one. *Axël*, the *Fleurs du Mal*, the *Diaboliques*, the *Contes Cruels*, Poe's tales, Vigny's poems, are among what the Youth first plucked in the garden. What he breathes in with their scent is the heroic and passionate spirit of letters.

The Youth has now a will. It remains but to find the way. A few more discoveries in this wonder-world of his lead him to it. He has still a giant or two to cope with, having hewn his path through the fairy forests of his own country. Faust entangles him a while, but he passes on to Carlyle, where he finds more to gather. Congenial Hero-Worship he grasps and devours ; it is all, however, except a choice flower or two of irony from the Pamphlets, yet it is enough, since Heroes are his religion. But his course is now

shaping itself, for Carlyle soon has too plain a taste. Shelley and Emerson, an intoxicating find, lie before him, and he is beginning to understand that his thirst is for the transcendental. He drinks long and deep at Epipsychidion and the Oversoul. Having drunk, he sees his way, stretching above him to perilous heights. But the heroic lesson of Axël bears up his strength. Besides, from Emerson onward, the turning-point, his way at least lies clear, however steep. The Youth's pilgrimage is now the scaling of idealism.

Maeterlinck has taken up the thread of Emerson's philosophy. So the “Belgian Shakespeare” is one of the Youth's revelations. It comes first from the *Princesse Maleine*, and the *Seven Princesses*, or *Pelléas and Mélisande*, but makes sure its hold with the preface to the *Ornement des Noces Spirituelles de Ruysbroeck le Vénérable*. The *Trésor des Humbles*, more clearly Emersonian, would have proved as potent had it been brought out in time. But the seed of mysticism had been sown already, or rather the mystic instinct had been awakened. At this stage the Youth is a very absolute pilgrim, and climbs the glaciers of things in themselves. Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists are bidden to strengthen the impulse the modern mystic gave. The heroic appetite the Youth began with is less for the art of letters now than for the literature of metaphysics, but every wit as keen. Along with the Alexandrian Greeks, Novalis is set upon and devoured, but other Germans prove too tough; Schelling, who would gasp if he knew, too matter of fact. The logic of sublime sound is more to the Youth's taste. *Parsifal*, more, however, from a literary than a musical standpoint, is discovered, and many a pilgrim must emulate *Der reine Thor*. It would be an unkindness to inquire how deep this spirit springs from below the surface, and it is only fair to keep to the evidence of personal appearances and of print. There is



plenty of it. If there be aught in a name, the editors of such magazines as *Le Saint Graal*, *Psyche*, *Le Lotus*, *L'Annonciation*, *Le Rêve et l'Idée*, are mystics, or were till the leaflets withered. The assumption is borne out by the fact that several, one Saint-Georges de Bouhéliér for instance, advertised their periodicals as *pages d'amour et de rêve entièrement rédigées* by themselves, or found a variety of other ways of expressing the same mystic one-man one-magazine principle. Further, were the Youth at this stage to have feigned realism, which he did not, his looks, even more, would have given him the lie. He may be said to have worn his soul upon his sleeve. I dried, pressed, and kept carefully an impression gathered once at Bailly's, who published occult letters in the lively broad daylight of the Chaussée d'Antin, of a wan and pink-haired spirit that floated in, prayed in faded accents for a copy of *Le bosquet de Psyché*, and melted away. There can be no doubt that this was a vision of the Pilgrim Youth.

It is very certain the Neo-Platonists' "ecstasis" can be but a poor straw to catch at in this latter day, with so many realities to grasp and hold or go under. The Youth felt this obscurely. Among the clouds he grew homesick for the earth. The suspicion came that ideals were meant to be realized. Two impulses stirred dimly in his mind. There was Baudelaire's bitter outcry echoed against "a world where Doing is no kin to Dreaming." There was also a lurking desire to enter into the organized system of human forces which time has long since sanctioned and set in working order. The outcome was the Catholic revival, which, however, as far as the Youth is concerned, ended but in more thorough death. In point of historical fact, Neo-Catholicism began at a banquet in 1890, when the Vicomte de Vogüé, who also proved his mysticism by founding the "Bock idéal" society, toasted the alliance of Church

and young France, and was cheered by the *Association des Étudiants* his host, and echoed by M. Henri Bérenger the chairman. The then new spirit of the Roman Church, as shown in Papal encyclicals, fed the alliance; the influence of the American Catholic clergy, and the enlightened doctrine of Cardinal Gibbons and Archbishop Ireland, were hailed with enthusiasm. Free-thinking at heart, young France applauded the Parliament of Religions. How short-lived the alliance was to be is shown by M. Henri Bérenger's statement a few years later that French youth “is henceforth uncompromisingly anti-clerical.” But for a space the Pilgrim Youth's literary way lies through austere cloisters, and follows the ancient and established road that leads to Rome. He enters on holy war armed with a magazine of his own which he may call *La Lutte*, *revue d'art catholique*, if he likes, there being a precedent. Or, like the San Péladan, he makes an offering to the Holy See of all his works (ever since he left the heroic stage he has been strewing his path with MSS.), undertaking to burn whatever the Council of the Index Expurgatorius may object to. Notwithstanding which he never gets to Rome. *L'Art et la Vie*, founded by Henri Bérenger and Firmin Roz with the idea of carrying their Emersonianism into practice by upholding what was called Neo-Catholicism, and was a kind of French Puseyism and Newman movement combined, commits itself solely to the “religion of the inward life,” outwardly hostile to the clergy. *L'Ermitage*, once a very monastery in the hands of its first editor, Henri Mazel, an unflinching Catholic, becomes a mere temple of letters with M. Ducoté as high priest.

On leaving the Church, the Youth goes over to the religion of the literary man. So far there has been an ethical element in his faith. He was in turns heroic, mystic, a politician even, literary pilgrim though he be. But now the

love of letters shall be his only care. Like Mallarmé at Oxford he exclaims, "La littérature seule existe!" and disregards Verlaine's contemptuous cry, "Et tout le reste est littérature." In the heroic stage he almost laughed at the craft of letters. What his heroes said was all he cared for. How they said it is his occupation now, and he studies technique, who snapped his fingers at it. That alone exists. The *Parnassiens*, in whose eyes perfection of verse was the height of poesy, and who suffered contumely for thinking so at the hands of the Youth, did not bide their time in vain. The Youth builds a new Parnassus as exclusive as Théophile Gautier's. Only it is built, not of alexandrines and other traditional metres, but of *vers libres*. How many and how subtle *artes poeticae* of the new *vers libre* are sketched out in conversation is impossible to say. That none is written is explained, the Youth says, when the stupendousness of such an attempt is considered. That the beauty of lawless verse is a thing of the spirit the Youth fails to see, and he labours to acquire the spontaneity of Viélé-Griffin. There is more hope for him in the study of Stuart Merrill (two of the most typical of French men of letters of the day are Americans), who gives less free a rein to his verse. At all events the Youth's ambition is to publish in the *Mercure de France*, where no ethical element disturbs the serenity of letters, and he emulates Mercurians, past and present: Henri de Régnier, apostle of the new technique, and fit son-in-law to a *Parnassien*; Paul Fort, who is literary in artfully naïve ballads; Gustave Kahn, who is naïvely complex; Pierre Louys, erudite in letters; Albert Samain, whom the new technique hardly influenced, the old, however, considerably; and a hundred others who borrow the pattern of the French Mercury's wings. The Youth at this stage seems wedded to letters for good.

But his way grows even narrower. Paris is less than Parnassus, even the new Parnassus, less than the poet's “Ivory Tower,” which jeering *jeunes* build up again half unconsciously on a plan of their own. For Paris it is that besets now the pilgrim Youth. The spirit of the most self-centred set in the world becomes his religion, and the Youth's new “ism” is Parisianism, which is as marked a phase of thought as any other. This is not the atmosphere of the boulevards; the man in Piccadilly is not the last thing in Londoners. The Youth breathes a compound air with a dash only of the traditional *boulevardier's* atmosphere, but his ideas are unmistakably tinged. He takes a peculiar delight in the blending of reflection and flippancy, breadth of thought and whimsical prejudice, such as Paris has the knack of. This literary conversing of Paris, where life in its aspects of greatest complexity seems so deftly and easily handled, and where what men look upon as its light sides appear to gain a new seriousness from being unexpectedly viewed through philosophical methods, will put his ideas in proper trim and teach him how to work them. So he strains his brain to fit it into the Parisian mould, prunes off pitilessly every tendency Paris considers tiresome, and studiously acquires all the little absurdities of mind Paris is so proud of.

The Youth's return to Paris, which he first wished for wings to fly from, and to the boulevards, which he would in his heroic stage have blasted for a sink of flippancy, follows upon his literary period not altogether unconnectedly. It is not a far cry from the poses of a craft to the affectations of a set, and the Youth is apt to fall into both. As a fact, in what he worshipped as pure letters he might already have detected much the interest of which was well-nigh only Parisian. M. Pierre Louys revives the Greek decadence with what seems exquisite literary erudition, and



his style is delusively Alexandrian, but the truth is his Aphrodite, and his Chloris, even Bilitis whose song he first sang (and his voice has never been as true since), are to be seen at L'Œuvre of an evening and driving in the Bois by day. Again, just as only a Parisian can catch the full meaning of what M. Louys's Greek hetairæ say, so it is quite impossible, outside of Paris to appreciate, M. Ernest Lajeunesse.

That Parisianism catches youth is shown by the mushroom-like rapidity with which M. Lajeunesse springs into fame. An ironical turn of mind, adapted with marvellous suppleness to its environment, and an astounding cocksureness, such as are exhibited in *Les Nuits, les Ennuis, et les Ames de nos plus notoires contemporains*, a book of parodies, where the irony is dazzling, and *L'Imitation de Notre Maître Napoléon*, where the cocksureness is even more remarkable, were bound (as M. Lajeunesse no doubt well knew) to win over youths tired of being "intense." Others play the same strain, like Jean de Tinan, who exemplifies the Parisian knack of playfully, but half seriously, entering into mountainous considerations of a molehill of an idea by treating at length of *Mlle. Cléo de Mérode, de l'Opéra, considérée comme symbole populaire*. But the worst of it is, the thing gets overdone, and the Pilgrim Youth all at once finds himself in the land of the Palais Royal farce, which in any case is not the form of Parisianism he ever meant harking back to.

On the brink of the *boulevardier* spirit, an abysmal habit of mind from which no one recovers, the Youth, whose pilgrimage is a series of shocks, has a rude awakening. The voice that calls him is one no Parisian can understand, and one which the Youth himself only dully hears, but he obeys it. There is something so utterly foreign and new to the Parisian youth in Walt Whitman, that, being still un-



Parisian enough to welcome new impressions, he gasps, having welcomed this one, and plucks leaves of grass the rest of the way. He will cast literature and dogma and Paris to the winds and be the Divine Average. With this prompting he finds nearer home a nucleus of new “Naturalists.” They may derive indirectly from the old, and from Emile Zola who made the name, but they disown the connection, and this propitiates the Youth. He must have a new world around him at each new revelation. For that matter, there is originality enough in Emile Verhaeren to make a new world, as far as new worlds in this sense go, although he is quite content to be only a poet, and plays no part in the christening of the new literary three-decker. Nor, indeed, does the teller of strange tales, George Eekhoud, albeit nothing loth to get on board and take a hand at the helm. This is enough to show the craft is Belgian, but it sails in French waters. The Youth follows, Whitman in hand, in its wake. Others come also. But their tack differs—by the length of a syllable. “Naturists,” not New “Naturalists,” are M. Maurice Leblond, who, on the strength of his twenty summers, writes with quite an experienced pen concerning the value of spring-tide and the worth of love, and M. Saint-Georges de Bouhéliér, already mentioned, whom M. Leblond avers to have “inherited Beethoven’s rustic pipes” (though he only writes, and writes in prose), and who converts the introspective mysticism of his earlier years (say seventeen) into a mystic philosophy of nature, set forth in the most startling and obscure of styles. *Le Rêve et l’Idée*, their first joint periodical venture, accordingly becomes *Documents sur le Naturisme*.

Perusing these documents the Youth “returns to Nature.” Fortunately, he has others. He even has a leaf or two from Edward Carpenter, those that have been

translated. Being, however, a literary pilgrim, he does not go back literally to nature. That is quite another question. His point is that he has discovered Whitman, mixed with Verhaeren, and added to his pilgrim's scroll.

By this time the Youth is fitted for the man's journey.

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### *XIII. Ten Years After: The Last of "Les Jeunes"*

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WHEN *la Revue blanche* died "les Jeunes" were no more, for the *Mercure de France* has reached middle age. The death of the last of the "Jeunes revues" closed an epoch in Paris. It was an absurd, delicious, perverse, naïve, and much-misunderstood epoch, a time of virulent pose and blazing affectation, of fascinating simplicity and charming boyishness, of twopenny-halfpenny cynicism and sterling gold sincerity; on the whole a lovable time, which will have left little behind it, but which one loved while it lasted, and which one cannot dismiss without an indulgent tear.

It all seems so long ago, now that it is quite dead. The mystic became anti-clerical. The transcendentalist was appointed secretary to a rising politician, and is now a rising politician himself. Hermits of the literary religion pulled down their Ivory Tower and frequented academic salons. The anarchist became a nationalist, and knew the exact price paid to General André and M. Delcassé by England to betray France. The art-for-art idealist demonstrated in the streets against an anti-religious and tyrannical Government. The Carlylean hero-worshipper also demonstrated, on the other side. The youth who used to be an inspired poet in irregular metre joined the staff of a boulevard daily and did picturesque reporting. The law student studied the laws and passed his examinations.

The old delightful days were over. Hair was cut, and lace ties, soft collars, velvet lapels, riding-crops for walking-

sticks, were as bygone as Gautier's red waistcoat. Serious periodicals with advertisements and a circulation invaded the Odéon bookstalls. The new Parisian generation appeared at the Théâtre Français, read the papers, heard of the Balkan peninsula and of Mr. Chamberlain's fiscal policy, took sides in its own home politics, voted at the elections, put Victor Hugo, Zola, Dumas fils, Alphonse Daudet in its library, and forgot what a "revue Jeune" was, or what a world of meaning there once was in the term. The last "revue Jeune" died because there were no more of "les Jeunes" left.

It was a heroic, strenuous, magnificently ridiculous time. It was, rather naturally, unknown outside Paris, though its echoes were faintly heard in London in the days of the *Dome*, the *Knight Errant*, the *Pageant*, and the early *Yellow Books*. But when the *Savoy* came out, it was already with us in Paris the twilight of the Jeunes. "Les Jeunes" were not heard of outside Paris because you had to be among them to make anything of them. The boulevard itself knew nothing about them, or very little, and that little was wrong. "Les Jeunes" held it a cardinal principle not to be known except among themselves. Moreover, they never actually did anything, they hardly had time. Besides, not to "arrive" was another of their cardinal principles, now as dead as the rest of their eternal maxims. But though they never did do anything, there was really some genius in the way in which they talked about what they would do; and the schemes which were never carried out, and the ideas which never came to anything, and the thinking which was got through and never got further, would have provided occupation for several generations. "Les Jeunes" crammed more thinking into less time, and left less behind them to show for it, than any other generation in literary history.

They did their best to be misunderstood outside their own circle, and they certainly were. In Paris, the boulevards, influential green-rooms, literary salons, leading newspaper offices, the "serious" reviews, not merely ignored the ferment going on in a section of young Paris, but were ignorant of it. When the Jeunes were first mentioned in a paper with a circulation, it was to be anathematized in the *Figaro* by Zola for an effete race of impotent *poseurs*. London criticism was almost as insular as that of the boulevards, and when it heard of the Jeunes, thought of absinthe-drinking, Latin Quarter bocks and amours, Henry Murger, Romanticism, Trilby, and other properties of stage Bohemia and British traditions of the "gay" city.

Young America made such herculean efforts as only America is capable of to get in tune with the Jeunes, and to reach the pitch of smartness which she supposed needful, and the *Chapbook* died of it. The Jeunes continued to be misunderstood. They were not smart, they were not Bohemian, they were not Romanticists, they did not drink absinthe, they did not talk about *épater le bourgeois*, they did not frequent the Café d'Harcourt in the Boul' Mich', still less Montmartre and the Moulin Rouge, they were never seen at Bullier's ball; they did not on the other hand cultivate *le spleen*, they were not neo-Byronic, they had not a broken heart among them, they were not wearied of life; in fact, they were nothing which they ought to have been, and they did not really pose so very much.

So far as I can remember, we began by being mystics. Before that, the *Revue indépendante* was merely brilliant and brilliantly written, with some "Symbolism" that was more of a style than a genuine "ism." But the *Revue indépendante* preceded and announced the actual era of the Jeunes. After it had died in distress—a complete collection



of it now is a valuable property—there was a pause, after which the Mystic Rose flowered. The Inner Life was revealed, the Ivory Tower loftily piled up. Saintliness, claptrap, Péladan and the Rose-Croix, Emersonianism, transcendentalism, the Oversoul, the religion of art, the mystic science of religion, Neo-Platonism, a dash of Hegel, some Novalis, much Maeterlinck of the earlier manner, Nietzsche and the Overman subsequently : it was all an exquisite jumble of ideas into which the youth plunged with perfervid spiritualism and a perfect fever of thirst for high thinking.

Mysticism became literary. The Poet was the Seer, and a perfect line was a religious revelation. The Poet had a right to shut himself up in his Ivory Tower to write it. Or literary craftsmanship was only the hand-maiden of mysticism. Only the Oversoul was worthy of being written about. In fact, so long as one was mystical, it mattered little which way one took one's mysticism. As for that, of course one could not go on taking it in any one way long. A hot-house plant, it developed rapidly, and under the forcing process threw out new shoots of unexpected types.

One natural but weakly growth which withered in a season was the Neo-Catholic revival, a sort of Puseyism. Just the same mysticism also grew to anti-clericalism. Translate mysticism into life ; life is transcendental ; life is a mystic oneness ; priestcraft oppresses life : there you have mystic anti-clericalism. Another offshoot was a sort of Early Victorian education-of-the-people movement with a mystic strain running through it of course, humanity becoming the transcendental entity. On one branch of mysticism Carlyleanism was grafted with a daring hand, hero-worship was a religion, the leading of peoples was a mystic mission, the Poet was Prophet. Transcendentalism worked back again to art for art, only this time there was no

Ivory Tower, only a den of bookishness ; the man of letters gave up missions, he was wedded to style, a mystic bride, as he proved by the absoluteness of his adoration : it was but the familiar religion of the literary man over again, and it did not last. It degenerated into Parisianism of the boulevards, and that was the beginning of the end of that set of the Jeunes.

Another set went through a last metamorphosis before death. Idealism, art for art, mysticism were all renounced, and Nature alone remained. But *le Naturisme* remained exceedingly transcendental. You felt Nature and were saved, or you did not and were lost. If you had grace, you were a Naturist ; if the demon of doubt, that is, the critical spirit, retained one finger of hold upon you, you were outside the pale. It was during this last phase that the memorable reconciliation took place between Zola, who had not the least idea what the Naturists meant, and the Jeunes, who, as Naturists, were at the opposite pole of *le Naturalisme* and of realism in literature—but then, of course, Zola never was a realist.

Now the Jeunes are dead. They lived some twenty years, they flourished full-blown only for about ten, from 1890 to 1900. Their latter decade at all events was representative of their whole history. The Jeune who had just left his teens in 1890 practically lived through all the phases of the Jeunes' existence. The Jeune who was already nearing thirty in 1890 lived them all over again. It was during the decade a sort of pilgrimage at express speed from new religion to new religion, a voyage of discovery at a hundred new beliefs a year. Perhaps a thousand boys in Paris went on the journey. They were fresh from their first University degree, and fresh from an extra University course of Baudelaire and Verlaine, Emerson and Carlyle, Novalis and Plotinus, Edgar Allan Poe and Barbey d'Aurévilly, Villiers

de l'Isle Adam and Shelley, Whitman and Mallarmé; in short, a very varied course.

It was a wonderful journey—will there ever be such a wonderful journey again? “Americas were discovered” at every turn, and they were all new, and everybody rushed ashore and explored with exquisite enthusiasm. It was in walks home from University lectures, spurred by large contempt of the lecturers, or in microscopic dens, on the wings of excited philosophizing, heightened by tea and cigarettes from midnight to 4 a.m., that the marvellous journeys were made. Some pilgrims tramped the streets all night, without having a single bock at a *café*, to avoid the atmosphere of gross minds, and also on account of the expense. One seer of seventeen—in spite of his comparative youth, he had already written two thick mystic volumes—held a peripatetic academy nightly in the Parc Monceau, at which disciples gathered to discuss spiritual problems in mythical symbols. Many contemplated retiring from the world and converting a Normandy farm-house or a Provençal stone cottage into a monastery for a small brotherhood, to live in meditation, among books, and in the communion of intellects; and some got as far as putting money by to purchase the monastery.

There were gathering-places, even in worldly Paris, the Parisianism and the boulevardism of which filled every Jeune with nausea, for the meeting of souls that understood each other. There was the 2-franc gallery at the Lamoureux and Colonne concerts, where listening to the proper kind of music was a religious rite. When it was not the right kind, when, for instance, Sarasate played acrobatics on one string, the gallery was a raging heaven of gods in fury, hissing, stamping—and rather relieved to work off the mystic mood physically. The stalls would weakly try to hit back, but soon subsided under contumely. They were

unutterably despised, and the few young gods who could have afforded to pay 12 francs would have been excommunicated by their brethren if they had. There were also the performances of the Sar Péladan, whose clap-trap took in the Jeunes most successfully, those of l'Œuvre, where none but contemptible "grocers"—I don't know why grocery was always considered a peculiarly ignominious trade—paid for their seats, and where young Paris learnt Ibsen and Bjørnsen. There were also the mornings at the Bibliothèque Nationale, in front of desks piled up with mystics and writers on necromancy, the Brahmapoutra and Whitman, Confucius and Browning, and a dozen other poets and philosophers, the more conflicting the better, so long as they were not modern cut-and-dried relativists, and into volume after volume the Jeune plunged till his brain reeled.

But to talk it all over was after all the essential thing. It was a Bacchanalian orgy of words at night where the Jeunes gathered. It was really almost their only dissipation. They were too clean-minded and boyishly pure for the Latin Quarter and Montmartre amours in which some as a matter of course assumed them to be steeping themselves, yet they were not quite the prigs others took them for. They merely had overheated brains. They had uncontrollable desires to work out a fresh system of philosophy every night. Their one way of getting drunk was on metaphysics. Towards three in the morning, a roomful of Jeunes discussing reached actual intoxication of the intelligence. Verse-spouting, hair-splitting, and mystic rhapsodizing for hours brought on genuine frenzy. Everyone had by then regenerated the world or come face to face with the Absolute. Of course they all thought themselves geniuses, and felt that they were of the same stuff as the geniuses of mankind, those at least whom they accepted and worshipped. Others they damned with violent contempt. Naturally they either



hated or adored. Where they worshipped, it was with touching boyish passion.

If they thought themselves geniuses, there was as a matter of fact some inchoate genius among them, though it does not seem yet to have come to anything. There was a marvellous amount of intellectual comprehension floating about in the atmosphere of the Jeunes. Many of them had extraordinary artistic facility, and there was anyhow no dullness among them. Naturally quick brains had been trained by furious mental gymnastics to a lightning rapidity of thought. Not to understand, even once, meant perpetual degradation, as not to adore the right gods, every one, meant eternal perdition. The fever of the brain from which Jeunes manifestly suffered certainly did not make them dull boys, and when they forgot to be mystical, they could show keen mother wit, though, of course, one of the things they most abhorred was "*esprit*." The Jeunes were an amusing generation, not altogether unconsciously.

The life of the Jeunes was reflected solely in the "Jeunes revues" of which the last is now dead. The papers and the "*revues sérieuses*," as they were called with cutting irony by the Jeunes, naturally never noticed the Jeunes' existence. Literary men who had "arrived" never ventured among them, as young prophets were careful to make enemies of most writers with established reputations by truculent and—what was worse—sometimes almost impishly clever criticism. Stéphane Mallarmé received the Jeunes and dreamily talked literary craft to them, but of course he was a Jeune himself to his death, and totally uninfluential. So the Jeunes wrote and read about themselves in their own reviews published by themselves for the world. One or two timid ventures followed the *Revue indépendante* after a pause for a few years. The number grew progressively by scissiparity. One editor held that literature should describe



Life considered as a harmonious whole, while the other's conscience forbade his accepting MSS dealing with any but the Inner Life, so one of them would found another review.

The "revues jeunes" thus multiplied rapidly. In the beginning of the nineties they swarmed. Each philosophical school of two or three followers, or one, had its own "organ." All the organs exchanged with each other and reviewed each other at length bitinglly or rhapsodically; and the serious reviews, the first nights at the Français, the novels of Zola, Bourget, Marcel Prévost, Abel Hermant, Paul Hervieu, even Huysmans, Rostand's *Cyrano*, and before them, Daudet, and actually Maupassant, were to the "Jeunes revues" as if they had never been. The "Jeunes revues" existed for regenerating the world, and, looking at it *sub specie aeternitatis*, could not stop to notice transient phenomena. Each Jeune, the moment he had an idea, started a review. He and a few disciples contributed monthly sums to pay for the printing, and moreover it is a fact every "Jeune revue" found some subscribers, sometimes half-a-dozen, sometimes nearly a hundred. While the periodical lasted, it was the editor's life-work. The patient labour and practical energy expended on the "Jeunes revues" were as remarkable as the passionate idealism with which the task was undertaken. Pocket-money and time and exquisite enthusiasm went to proving Neo-Platonism monthly in sixteen pages between paper covers with the sign of a lotus, the seal of Solomon, a rising sun, or any other symbol more or less geometrical and therefore cheap to print.

It is to be feared that a complete documentary history of the Jeunes can never be written. Months of research among the halfpenny odd boxes on the Quais would not enable one to draw up a full list of all the young reviews. Unfortunately the Jeunes themselves generally threw away

their collections, no one of which indeed could ever possibly have been complete, when they gave up Neo-Platonism for picturesque reporting and the return to nature for secretarships to rising politicians. The history of the Jeunes could merely be outlined in a fragmentary bibliography of their reviews. As far as can be recalled, mysticism was the most profitable phase for the small printers, usually in out-of-the-way sleepy provincial towns, who turned out the periodicals and sent them up in bundles to the Parisian editor's *hôtel meublé*, where they blocked up his bedroom, and whence he carried them himself in parcels of three, six, or nine to the booksellers who consented to put them in the window.

The Odéon stalls always took enormous consignments, of at least thirty copies a month. They were not generally sold, but when returned, the thumb-marks showed that the seed had been sown in the minds of young France, and the editor felt that he had not been unworthy of his mission. In the early part of the decade the Odéon bookstalls were mystic from end to end, from *L'Annonciation* to *Le Saint Graal*, and taught the gospel of the inner life just opposite the terminus of the big yellow 'bus, which is the main link that binds Paris together, for it connects the Latin Quarter with Montmartre. Conductors and drivers would occasionally turn over the mystic leaves. The editors stood by trembling. If the seed were to be sown even in these untilled minds !

*Le Rêve et l'idée* was an exactly square, large-sized publication. Its cover changed hues according to the monthly mood of its editors—now dreamily pale green, now passionately blood-red, now purely white. If my recollection is right, it was edited by the prophet of seventeen who held a peripatetic academy in the Parc Monceau at nights. Afterwards he concluded that in the culture of the inner life each must stand alone, since

the ego is one and impenetrable, and he published a periodical exclusively devoted to introspection in which no one but himself was allowed to write. It is difficult to recall what the leaves of the mystic periodicals contained. What they chiefly taught was that you must be mystical somehow, and must express your mysticism in magnificent language. The style really was splendid. Sentences full of majesty even now re-echo in the ears of those who lived among the Jeunes. There was one sublime period which culminated in the thundering close: "Et les mégalosaures sont morts," reverberating like a knell. No one ever knew what it meant, but all who were once Jeunes remember having repeated it, even those who were already then dropping mysticism for smart stylism. A contributor to most of the "revues Jeunes" prepared his readers for appreciation by calling himself So-and-so—like Lorenzo—"The Magnificent." You thus knew what to expect.

In the midst of mysticism, Carlyle and Emerson had an immense influence on the Jeunes. Gradually Plotinus was dropped. That "doubt ceases with action" was suddenly discovered, and the discovery roused enthusiasm. To do something at any hazard was one of the new creeds. To translate transcendentalism somehow into life was another. Various "movements" were developed and "leagues" formed as well as reviews. A Catholic revival was the first practical effort. The alliance of the Church of Rome and Young France was toasted at a banquet in 1890. and the Association of Students responded to a man. But "Neo-Catholicism" died most suddenly; the chairman of the Association of Students at that banquet, M. Henry Bérenger, became one of the leaders of the militant political anti-clerical party.

Neo-Catholicism, however, did not become anti-clericalism without intermediate phases, for it must always be

borne in mind that the Jeunes were remarkably sincere. A strenuous humanitarianism inspired by Carlyle, whose influence recurred constantly in unexpected ways, was an early development. To lead mankind: that was the mission. Hero-worship was mathematically worked out into a philosophy. A smart professor of philosophy at the Lycée Condorcet discovered that mankind is an organism of which geniuses are the brain, and gathered round him disciples to make up the brain. He had for several years a devoted following which would have conquered the world for him if he had asked it; he had the golden gift of persuasion, though he is suspected of having had his tongue in his cheek all the time. Nothing, as usual, ever came of his "Cité Moderne"—the title of his huge volume—and his young brain-makers. An offshoot was a "league of moral action"—very vague moral action—with an "organ" which died rapidly.

The decade ended with a third phase after various moral actions with which doubt was to have ceased. Doubt returned fortified by the experience to a faction of the Jeunes, who proceeded to snap their fingers joyfully at the Everlasting No and to re-echo Mallarmé's rather ghastly cry that only literature exists. The theory of the *vers libre* was pounded at. Nothing mattered once more but the colour of a vowel or the case of assonance versus rhyme. *L'Ermitage* ceased to be even a temple of letters and became a writingman's workshop—in which only shop is talked. The *Mercure de France* throughout had remained staidly faithful to mere letters, judging the world from the sole point of view of what can be written about it, for instance, through the crooked but keen eyes of Rémy de Gourmont, one of the greatest artists in causticity who ever wrote, and the master of a fairly diabolical irony. M. de Gourmont afterwards started



the eagerly modern *Revue des idées*, and secured articles on radium from competent scientific contributors, another sign of the end of the Jeunes. The *Mercure de France* steadily grew in influence and in size. It is now a huge bi-monthly volume and a "Jeune revue" no longer, but a "serious," overwhelming compendium of contemporary literature. The *Revue blanche*, started in a semi-mystical mood, developed the literary spirit, then took on a political temper which degenerated into rather dry-as-dust socialism and anarchism. *L'Humanité nouvelle*, which continued the *Société nouvelle* of Brussels, the first literary and *libertaire* review, would have been highly shocked to be called a "Jeune revue," and never was, belonging to a later period. For that matter, it thrived until lately and provided a compendium like that of the *Mercure*, with politics thrown in. Now it also is dead. The *Mercure*, the *Revue blanche*, and the *Plume*, with the *Société nouvelle*, were the leading "revues Jeunes." They have either died or ceased to be Jeune. The day is well remembered when it was announced for a fact that the shares of the *Mercure*, which for years were a pleasant fiction, for the first time had paid a dividend. It was not wholly a glad day.

While in this third phase one section of the Jeunes, disgusted with action, abjured writing for a purpose altogether, another, on the contrary, grew more intensely purposeful than ever. Whitman was the guide this time. Walt was discovered by the Jeunes early in the decade. The *Magazine international* translated all the most Whitmanish of the "Leaves of Grass" and from thence started to vindicate Life. The religion of life was believed in as fervently as the faiths of the Inner Life or of the Ivory Tower had been a few years before. The shibboleth was: Life is wholly sublime. The critic who carped at a single



detail of life was excommunicated. One was allowed to find not one crumpled rose leaf.

It was all quite absurd, but delightful. The Jeunes tried spasmodically to live with peasants, to buttonhole 'bus conductors and other Divine Averages. One returned to nature, knowing little about her, as all were town-bred. In flannels and wideawakes, the Jeunes tramped field and forest and dreamt of establishing a Walden in the suburbs of Paris, studied birds, flowers, trees, with pathetic zeal, for hardly one of them could name a bird from its song or recognize more than half a dozen species of flora. "*Le Naturisme*" was gradually evolved out of the religion of life. Besides the *Magazine international*, which started the Praise of Life, *Pan* in Germany raised a magniloquent voice. Munich and Paris were of course at the time furiously pantheistic. Brussels was also praising life vehemently.

*L'Art jeune*, which still had a sneaking liking for the religion of letters, was succeeded by the fierce and flamboyant *Coq rouge*, which crowed triumphantly in purple stories of the violent amours of Walloon and Flemish peasants, who are quite close to nature. *La jeune Belgique*, a once representative review, had by then long since been tabooed as old, effete, and "not alive." The last qualification was the supreme insult. It sounds remarkably like American journalism, but the similarity is misleading. The Jeunes were never less practical or more exclusive and contemptuous of "arriving" than while they were praising life and refusing to acknowledge that there is a single ignoble speck on its glorious face.

After the *Magazine international* died, from a sudden and immediately fatal ambition to develop from a Jeune into a serious review, the deliciously named *Documents sur le Naturisme*, afterwards pruned down to *Revue naturiste*, continued the creed with some unimportant

variations of doctrine. It was the last "Jeune revue" of the Religion of Life, which was the last phase. Through its editors took place the memorable reconciliation between Zola and the Jeunes, to the honour, indeed, of both parties, for it was entirely brought about by Zola's brave dash into the battle of the Dreyfus case, and by the headlong, uncalculating enthusiasm which it aroused among the majority of the Jeunes. Zola the "Naturalist" henceforth led that quite other "ism," "Naturism," and the Jeunes adored with remarkable, or perhaps not at all remarkable, lack of discrimination.

Before the Dreyfus case, the Praise of Life had produced a specialized "movement." This aimed at teaching the masses to praise life and at revealing to the Divine Average that it is divine. The Théâtre Civique acted Molière and sang Schumann up at Montmartre, to audiences of workmen and workwomen, whose willingness was pathetic and whose appreciation was on the whole remarkably keen. "Jeunes revues" more or less connected with the movement were *L'Aube* and *L'Enclos*, the latter being, as a matter of principle, not sold but given away.

Meanwhile, the religion of the literary man of the other section of the Jeunes drifted into the creed of boulevardism, and that was the beginning of the end. The priests of the cult of style became clever and brilliant. Simultaneously, mystics, naturists, pantheists, anarchist-communists, became politicians, for and against the Combes Cabinet. The Jeunes are dead, and, for the present, no new Jeunes can claim their inheritance.

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## XIV. *The Heirs of "Les Jeunes"*

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### I.—THE PASSING OF MYSTICISM

THE Jeunes who died ten years ago did leave heirs, but they are not Jeunes. They are picturesque reporters, "théâtres" who patronize "théâtres" old enough to be their mothers, playwrights of twenty-five who had two *succès d'estime* and one paying one before they were twenty, poets of nineteen at a premium in Duchesses' drawing-rooms, politicians of eighteen busy overturning the Republic, politicians of seventeen who slap their masters for doubting the divine inspiration of Joan of Arc, important secretaries of twenty-four to Socialist Radical Cabinet Ministers who will sit in Parliament as soon after they reach twenty-five (the minimum legal age) as possible, and will be Ministers in their turn at thirty; they are even real poets, poets who write poetry and real writers who write, merely because they like it; they are even young philosophers and young enthusiasts and young artists and young discoverers of the world, as their elders were: but they are not Jeunes. They have talent, cleverness, ideas, they may even have creeds, convictions, and shibboleths as their elders had, and they apparently have a good deal more ambition, but they lack the something that made the Jeunes what they were, that ran in the blood of the old Jeunes. They have come too late or too early into the world, like Verlaine's "pauvre Gaspard" (though most certainly like him in no other way), to be the Jeunes of to-day. To-morrow in France may have its Jeunes as

yesterday had ; to-day has them not. To-day has a great many other things, but none of them exactly like that generation of yesterday. It might be curious for a Frenchman to consider whether the same change has not happened in England and whether the London Jeunes of ten years ago have not also died handing the same torch on to no direct heirs. Perhaps everywhere the same way of being young jumps a day, and to-morrow will be young again after the manner of yesterday, though to-day is not.

The heirs of the Jeunes have creeds and shibboleths, but they have fewer and less violent, that perhaps is one of the changes. What things have died in ten years ? Mysticism is one of them. The Jeunes rediscovered mysticism ; they derided Ferdinand Brunetière for announcing the "bankruptcy of science," but while science had not failed, religion, or at least the religious spirit, was equally solvent. Their fathers had been brought up Positivists ; they awoke wondering to a mysterious world. They dwelt in mystery, they insisted upon being surrounded by mystery, they would on no account accept a world without mystery. Their plain and strenuous fathers looked upon them in amazement : boys feeding on fairy-tales at twenty were beyond them. The boys considered their fathers indulgently, whose horizon had been circumscribed by the artificial hard line of a self-deluded positive knowledge. They knew that the unknowable was beyond, and the unknowable was always with them. They looked at all things under its aspect. They read, they wrote, they dreamt, they played mystically. They discovered Plotinus, Novalis, they penned never a sonnet as mere literature, but threw out a feeler into world mysteries with the last tiercet ; they never laid plans for this life without an eye upon the next, and they loved talking of death over books in the Boul' Mich' ; they never made up to a girl of the Latin Quarter without asking

themselves "What is the mystery of passion?" before, and "Have we been one with the mystic universe?" afterwards. Were they young asses or young prigs? Neither. They were most sharply intelligent and exceedingly genuine and fresh. The wave that swept over their generation came from a natural upheaval. It drenched them with curious questionings, religion and no dogma, yearnings and no one faith, a restless anxiety of the soul, a desire for the truth and no truth. The wave passed away before the heirs of the Jeunes came upon the strand, and they remain high and dry without a drop of mysticism upon them. What they know they learnt by experience, the philosophies they hold they came to by reason, when they doubt they doubt rationally, and when they believe they can tell you why. The Jeunes said that you never could explain the why of anything; you felt it or you did not, if you did not you were damned. There was not one truth, there were many truths, each one absolute. The co-existence of an infinity of absolutes was one of the contradictions of being which was among the most absolute truths. You felt several truths at once or successively by divination, direct perception and ecstasis. No intelligent man but what in his day seized thus at least a dozen truths. No proper truth could be conceived otherwise than by immediate perception. What was the beauty of words, line, colour, or sound? An absolute truth for divination. Literary criticism, art criticism, musical criticism were the almost blasphemous makeshifts of low minds, and not a Jeune condescended to be a critic. Comment upon the sublime having felt it, if you liked; reasoning upon it was absurd. Real criticism could never be half-way between worship and execration. Life, death, love, nature, mankind, morals, society, faith, were all so many fields in which absolute truths grew by the thousand for him to pluck who had grace.



Those who had it not, those for whom the mystic rose had not bloomed, were not even objectionable, they were not. Most absolute fools ! But the Jeunes were not fools. They knew a very great deal about literature, art, music, metaphysics—less perhaps about life—for their age. They pretended the knowledge had come to them by intuition ; the fact was they had worked hard for it, and the first real qualification required for admission into their mystic circle was to have a busy brain. Ostensibly the sole gift which could admit you was a divine perception.

We look at the heirs of the Jeunes remembering our divine perceptions and smile. We smile at ourselves but we smile a little sadly at the heirs. Our absolute foolishness left us a something which keeps us out of touch with them. They have no absolute foolishness, the wise gods forbid ! It may come hereafter to their heirs again but they are terribly free from it. At fifteen or even only ten years' interval, for the Jeunes had a dying kick of mysticism left in them still towards 1900, mind to mind has become totally uncomprehending and this mental outlook gazes at that blankly. No doubt the Jeunes were far enough away from their elders (if the writer could remember the latter), but they could not have been further than they are from their heirs. Where are the mystics now ? The Jeunes in their sporting pursuit of the unknowable even went in sometimes for table-turning, though with a shrewd eye for the distinction between the data and the quackery of psychical research. About the only young mystics left to-day are the victims of some such forms of quackery who therefore don't count, a handful of unrepresentative acolytes of dead "little religions" founded on nothing stronger than charlatanism, that pays the charlatans well. To such a pass have absolute truths fallen. No boy to-day has the divine perception of the absolute ; not one knows

the state of ecstasis ; not one comes face to face with God, not one even has had an intuition of the Riddle of Universe. Is there a Riddle of the Universe ? the boy asks. We never doubted it. If he grant there be one, he will explain it to you. More probably he holds that there is none, and will explain why there can't be. The Jeunes considered it an alternate blasphemy, either to deny the riddle, or, affirming it, to understand it otherwise than by immediate divination of the Essence. He considers that they wasted time by putting a riddle into a Universe which is perfectly plain to him. Everything is clear and certain to him ; he does not doubt, or, having doubts, clears them up with vigorous reasoning. The Jeunes were absolute always, and absolute also in their questionings. He is not absolute, he is rational ; his questionings come to his brain, not his heart. He does not believe where he cannot prove, he does not even doubt what he cannot prove, he lets it be. He does not even deny mystic faith, worse than that, he accepts it as a fact to take count of. He is the deadliest young piece of clear and cold-eyed brain any age ever brought forth. If he were sceptical or had just a redeeming touch of cynicism the Jeunes whom he has succeeded might feel with him. They in their day could be Montaignes in the intervals of mysticism, or could rail at the gods passionately when not communing directly with them. But the terror of him is that he knows scepticism is absurd and cynicism shallow. He cannot say with jesting Pilate, What is truth ? He knows there is truth and that he is finding it out, if he has not found it out already . He cannot curse the gods with Renan<sup>2</sup> or with Gloster in *King Lear*, he has weighed the gods and found them on the whole not wanting. He cannot be optimist or pessimist, for to be either is absurd. He cannot give way to passion or trample passion under, for passion is an excellent thing when it does not interfere with

one's work. He cannot even be wholly reasonable, for he clearly perceives that everything cannot be accounted for by reason.

The death of mysticism has altered completely the pilgrimage on which the youth of to-day goes. Perhaps to be a real *Jeune* one must be a bit of a mystic. One must be mystic in one's metaphysics and mystic in one's love making. One must find some mystery in one's pen, ink, and paper as well as in the running brooks, one must wonder a little at the mystery of one's self, and a great deal at the mystery of the mistress's eyebrow. One cannot be sure that anything has nothing mysterious about it. If one writes a five-act tragedy, or an essay bludgeoning a rival *Jeune* Review editor, if one grubs away in the Bibliothèque Nationale or picks daffodils all one sublime day with the dearest girl in the world, if the dearest girl throws one back upon the resources of sombre man-talk about the few really essential things in the world over cups of tea in darkened chambers, or one considers the criminality of mankind in the abstract, in fact if one does anything at all, or nothing, one should do it with the abiding sense of mystery. The heirs of the *Jeunes*, I fear, do all these things without it. Therefore they are not *Jeunes*. They do not feel the world is their oyster, or if it is, an oyster they opened long ago with a jolly sharp knife. They do not wonder at the world, they accept it; what is more they do not wonder at themselves. The world does not perplex them; precise problems in the world perplex them, and they get into as horrible scrapes as ever, one is glad to think, but the great, whole, terrible world does not look at them with its one unfathomable eye, as it fixed the *Jeunes*. They have ordered their lives properly and pigeon-holed their world problems sensibly and logically; they live no longer in the same whirl of different but equally absolute faiths.

They are not more settled, but more practical intellectually, than the Jeunes were. The latter had not only some settled faiths but a great number, and each one was so certainly settled that you cut a man for ever, if you did not knock him down, for blowing the foul breath of scepticism upon any one of them. But they had not ordered and classified their intellectual lives, each absolute was as good as another, and you had no sooner settled one than a totally contrary one troubled you. You could not adopt the literary man's, the philosopher's, the artist's, the lover's faith, or the faith of the young man in a hurry to get on, solely, and stick to it. You had to hold them all successively, or, better, simultaneously. You had to get on, but you must love ; you had to philosophize as well as love, and if you were religious or political or sociological and not at the same time an artist and a man of letters to the same degree, you were damned. In fact the great one eye of the whole fearful world was constantly looking at the Jeunes and they could not get away from it. Their heirs seem to have classified themselves and mapped out the world more practically. This is only saying that the thing that is most dead to them is mysticism. To the Jeunes the world was whole and mystic ; for their heirs parts of it may be still quite uneasy to understand, but to consider the whole curiously as one riddle is, owing to the pressure of matter on the space of life, a waste of time, which it certainly is if you don't enjoy wasting time in that way.

The Jeunes believed in metaphysics ; perhaps they believed in metaphysics first of all. Don't talk to their heirs about metaphysics. The only fashionable metaphysical science is that of Professor Bergson which kills the old metaphysics. The Jeunes enjoyed finding a metaphysical basis for everything. The commoner the thing, the greater the delight in tracing it to its essential root. Metaphysics



have gone the way of mysticism, both having flourished together, like the sisters they are. Their twin revival was one of the marks of the Jeune period ; their decline now is certain and no less marked. Who now enjoys the romance of the Critique of pure reason or the fun of Schopenhauer's Four-fold Root ? Not the heirs of the Jeunes who are only bored by them under compulsion at college. Not one takes the trouble to read even his own important self metaphysically, as his elders always did, to seize himself, for instance, at 9-25 a.m. this day and determine what at that particular moment of the mode called Time his bearing was to the substance of the Universe, to consider—besides himself—the boulevards, his office, his father and mother, his friends and his sweetheart, essentially. This was the constant practice of the Jeunes who had lost a day if they had not once in it contemplated the essence of something. They considered a charming little music-hall dancing-girl in her relation to Eternity, and wrote about her accordingly. They even examined the bourgeois as being necessarily after all a very distantly relative mode of some absolute substance, and dissected the Philistine to find with a microscope the atom of essential entity within him. Their heirs do not look upon such mental exercises as a serious occupation, and call them mere pastimes and a by-play to the business of life ; they have determined that metaphysics are a mere game of the intellect, as mysticism is only an indulgence of the sensibility. This of course is a most reasonable view, but it was not that of the Jeunes. The latter spent their pocket-money printing magazines of metaphysics ; in the magazines managed by their heirs, a great number of which are published by real publishers, and are actually sold by real booksellers, you will not find one page of metaphysics a month. The absolute died with the Jeunes.



Religion a yet stranger fate than death befell. As they were mystical, the Jeunes were religious normally. They had no religion, but many religions, which is the normal condition of all naturally religious persons. They naturally also hated a great number of religions, they hated indeed any particular one you could name, as they had the normal instinct of pious minds. They were insolent, iconoclastic and blasphemous, as all truly religious people are. The churches delighted them by calling them atheists and cynics, and they went on their way religiously rejoicing, pious at every single step. They aimed at never doing aught otherwise than piously, and they hoped that religion was their daily food. Prayer was not for Sundays but for every hour of the week. They prayed when they went up to Montmartre to see the sun rise, or when they went to a lecture at the Sorbonne. They read religiously, they wrote religiously, they played, they larked, they played the fool, they worked, and they talked, all religiously. The only unpardonable sin among them precisely was to deny the religious meaning of any one instant in time or thing in space; they made a daily food of religion and hated all churches. Their heirs look back upon this callow freshness with indulgence. Their heirs know very well the worth of religions, having estimated it carefully, they know they are good not only for the multitude but for a large number of suitable temperaments among the few. They quarrel with no one for his religion, they force theirs upon no one. They cheerfully accept all churches, each in its place, having classified them as other things. They are not ingenuous enough to call priests henchmen of the Everlasting No; they accept the creeds and their ministers. The Roman Catholic revival of to-day more than anything else shows the curious fate that has befallen religion.

For a month or so the Roman Catholic Church had

entertained hopes of capturing the Jeunes. The leader of the short-lived neo-Catholic revival of twenty years ago afterwards became one of the chief political supporters of M. Combes in his anti-clerical campaign. The Jeunes were too religious—too religious all round—to be of much use to the Church. They terrified political churchmen, and the churchmen put them off. They soon hated churches again with that hatred which only deeply religious people can feel. Very few of them ever professed any established and conventional faith, and in all the “isms” which they promoted Roman Catholicism never found a place. Their magazines, pamphlets, and small paper volumes almost always attacked churches with religious violence. They mixed religion up with everything and were still ready to subscribe to Gambetta’s *Clericalism, that is the Enemy*, if put in less stump-oratorical language. Their heirs do not mix wines; when they feel like religion they ask for a standard classified brand; when they do not, they drink some quite different growth. Among them a recent Roman Catholic revival has appeared, which seems a good deal stronger than that of twenty years ago, but they have entirely dropped the callow habit of being religious out of church. Many of them are in close touch with the political Church of Rome in France; many are by up-bringing, confirmed by conviction, devout church-goers, whereas those of their elders who had been educated in a strict Christian faith invariably broke away from it, and those who rediscovered Christianity had generally come from free-thinking surroundings. They hold, in fact, through an important minority, by close ties to the Church, to which they are of certain usefulness. Many of their magazines and books make a public and official profession of obedience to the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church, a demonstration unknown in the days of the Jeunes. Thus bound to

churches through the close ties of a minority, they are not for the rest occupied in the least degree with religion. The ardent magazines of the *Jeunes*, each of which was a flaming sermon, never came out unkindled by religious fires. You could not in any one get an article accepted that had not at least one paragraph of religious enthusiasm. The Editor's notes on green tissue paper at the end of the number were never without it, and the condemnation of a hostile poet or the praise of a friendly one was always based finally on essential religious grounds. The young magazines of to-day praise and condemn on literary grounds simply. They adopt polite society's rule—which aroused the greatest loathing in the *Jeunes*—that religion shall be left out of discussion : to bring, or drag, it invariably in was the *Jeunes'* rule. They call a rival poet a bad poet, not an evil prophet, and a friendly one a good one, not a thinker whose inspiration is an enharmonic of the universal Essence. They certainly are more restrained critics than the *Jeunes*, yet one misses the latter's fire. They have put away into a compartment the incorrigible religiousness which made the *Jeunes* what they were, and they have many magazines which officially reserve religion from discussion, a limitation which to the *Jeunes* would have been unthinkable, just as the latter had no official Roman Catholic groups among them with "organs" of their own. The *Jeunes* were constantly preoccupied with religion and were most intolerant of religions ; their heirs have formed among them definite religious groups, and in the mass do not trouble about religion.

The anti-clerical *Jeunes* were troubled with religious doubts. Their heirs, among whom a clerical party exists, seem not to know such doubts. The presence of that party in their midst appears to act in their estimation as a lightning conductor ; it draws off the doubts which they

might feel. If they want religion they join the clerical party, if they don't they don't. They have classified human activities much better than the Jeunes ever did. They are either sons of the Church or detached from religion. The Jeunes never could make up their minds to believe solely in literature, in art, in politics, or in science ; the religious dream haunted them and specialized religions left them unsatisfied. With the religion of the literary man, the artist's creed of beauty, the politician's faith in progress, the credo of science, they could not help mixing a more general religiousness. They might hold to any one of those faiths, but they asked for more ; they might believe in good verse, in a beautiful picture, in the reform of mankind, in a perfect theorem, yet they still asked for more. Their heirs do not ask for much more. They have scientific, political, artistic, especially literary groups, each group has its faith, its followers and its periodical, and no group trespasses except by polite permission on another. A young man of to-day belongs to one group or to several, and does not mix one up with another, as a member of several clubs does not introduce a dozen men from one club to the men of another. To-day is wise enough to have many relative creeds and therefore has few doubts. The Jeunes tried to have absolute faiths, and were perplexed accordingly ; their groups did not apologize for intruding upon one another, but trampled upon one another vigorously ; they never pretended to acknowledge that each one might see one aspect of many-sided truth, but each claimed to have a vision of the whole truth and consequently condemned the other. Seeking the whole truth, the Jeunes were therefore always in doubt. Their heirs are content with parts of the truth and accordingly feel secure. The Jeunes went through terrible crises, called to Christianity for help, and commonly finding none (for the churches were singu-

larly unhelpful to them) were thrown back upon the only faith they had to cling to, the faith that there was some faith in which all things met. Their heirs are lucky possessors of greater stability, lucky to be born in a time of securer if less spacious faiths. They do not seem to know those pathetic doubts which made their elders in boyhood try to pray to a Christian, a Buddhist, some personal god, then turn away and rail, afterwards turn back and pray more fervently and with yet more touching simplicity, seek a divine sign in everything they did, read religion into their everyday lives, behave sometimes like dark dramatic puritans and narrow zealots—Parisians, keen-witted, sharp and intolerantly intelligent though they were. They seem too busy, these heirs of theirs, too busily employed in doubt-tight compartments, ever to cry out in the dark. They are literary, artistic, scientific, political, and religious, in batches, which may overlap but do not clash. They show amazing activity in each compartment, and may leave more precise work behind them than the Jeunes. They have formed religious organizations which the Jeunes certainly did not possess; they have succeeded in political engineering such as the Jeunes never dreamt of; they have sometimes specialized in science as the Jeunes never could; and they have carried artistic and literary criticism to a point of precision and refinement which the Jeunes never had time to attain: they neither doubt nor believe as the Jeunes did, and the wave of questioning faith and devout scepticism which swept over the latter has left them high and dry.



## II.—YOUNG REALISTS

AS dead as mysticism are Symbolism, Decadentism, Naturism, and Anarchism. In fact the only actual "ism" now alive seems to be "Arrivism." All these things died with mysticism because they were in part born of it and in part fed upon it. In art and in life, the things that are dead now died because mysticism died, and what replaces them owes its existence to the killing of mysticism; at the time of the *Jeunes* almost everything that lived was mystically born. Decadentism then already had one foot in the grave and Symbolism was on the brink, but neither was yet quite dead and both were kept partially alive in different degrees, the latter more than the former, by the mystic element there was in them. Both were literary "movements," but it was the philosophy in both that appealed to the *Jeunes* more than the literature. Decadentism was already very nearly dead, it survived no longer as a system, literary or philosophic, the literary cult of far-fetched things and curious stale beauty or the philosophy of decay and perversion, but merely as a literary and philosophic fad with some interesting character of its own. In literature the fad was valuable because of the strange and rare flowers which it had produced, but its real value was its mystery. Something of Decadentism was preserved by the *Jeunes* because the fashion with all its pose and silliness touched one mystic truth, the faint beauty of dying things. Decadentism cared for nothing that was alive and the *Jeunes* were very much alive, but they had a keen perception of the interesting things of this world. They saw that Decadentism had rediscovered the picturesqueness of decay, and so much they retained of Decadentism. That was their mysticism

at work, for to them dying things were wonderful because of the life that was leaving them. Decadentism grubbed about in decay, the Jeunes took on a particle of the Decadentism bequeathed to them and philosophized gorgeously upon the mystery of decay. The Decadents (who preceded the Jeunes, but not immediately) only played with dying things ; the Jeunes in their magnificent way read sermons in corruption. The Decadents were picturesque and amazingly clever, the Jeunes always remembered to be religious as well as clever.

Symbolism, which was flourishing when the Jeunes came of age, was retained to a greater extent than Decadentism by them, but on the same principle. Nobody has yet determined exactly and completely what Symbolism was. As a literary system it propounded the not very new principle that the highest poetic thoughts, having no adequate correlative in words, must, to be represented in words, be expressed by the most fitting images of them which can be put into words : no real poet of course has ever written real poetry otherwise. As a philosophy Symbolism was much vaguer ; it might extend to a metaphysical pure idealism, or it might be whittled down to the mere commonplace of the interpretation of truth by parable. The Jeunes retained more of Symbolism than of Decadentism. They liked symbols and loved their mystic meaning ; they remembered in the enormous literary output of Symbolism much that was real poetry, but what they remembered chiefly in Symbolism was an aspect of it to which the Symbolists themselves paid little attention. The latter were literary beyond everything, and they really cared for their symbols almost solely as instruments for renewing poetic language. The methods of the Parnassiens had been worked for all they were worth and more. The study of symbolic language for its own sake, and the

elaborate cultivation of figure rather as an end unto itself than as a means of representation, provided relatively new poetic machinery, which was set going with enthusiasm and in its turn eventually worked itself out. The mere literary technique of Symbolism did not interest the Jeunes overmuch, and it was already wearing out when they came along. What interested them most in Symbolism was something which for a great part they put into it themselves. The idea of Signs must always fascinate mystically inclined minds ; either to look upon the world itself as a Symbol or to represent that Symbol by twice removed interpretation in symbols of their own choosing must delight them. The possibility of such mental exercises, which the Symbolists themselves, busy with a new toy of literary technique, scarcely heeded, was what chiefly interested the Jeunes in Symbolism. The Symbolists who succeeded the Decadents were not really mystics at all, they were artists who had found a relatively new material to work in, and they used it with delight. The Jeunes, always remembering to be religious, read a religion into Symbolism, the religion of Signs (which may be the definition of all religions), and what they retained of that "ism" was what was mystical in it, or was the mysticism which they themselves had put into it. The only thing that was alive in Symbolism when the Jeunes flourished was that mystic element ; when the Jeunes and mysticism died, Symbolism died instantly, and it is much more dead now than Classicism.

The Jeunes were very active while they lasted and played strenuously with a vast number of ideas, but they did not actually invent more than one "ism," Naturism, and that has died the death of mysticism. It of course owned to no relationship with literary "Naturalism" which was ignored by the Jeunes ; it was a philosophy to

regenerate the world, a religious worship of life, a mystic return to nature. It is wholly dead now, killed by the slaughter of mysticism. The heirs of the Jeunes may still reform the world (though with less proselytizing convictions), enjoy life, and take an interest in nature, but they no longer spell Nature and Life with capitals ; they do not spend a spring day in the woods with the feeling that plucking a daffodil is a religious rite, or tell themselves constantly that their own little lives are part of the great oneness of things, they do not worship life as a mystery and nature as its symbol, as the Jeunes did. Naturism also has been killed with mysticism.

In art and in life the Jeunes were mystics. What they retained in their art of Symbolism and Decadentism was the mystic side of both, and Naturism in art was a religious faith. In life, Naturism was for the purpose of their own lives a mystic interpretation of the joy of living ; towards the lives of others the only particular attitude of the Jeunes was Anarchism, and that also was mystic, and that also is dead completely. The Jeunes paid no heed to the practice or even the theory of politics, and had the greatest contempt for sociology ; the only doctrine governing the relations of men was Anarchism, not applied with any rigour or even talked about often with much keenness, but understood as a matter of course and deduced from the dogma of the essential religiousness of all things. Anarchism is as dead as Decadentism, Symbolism, and Naturism, and all died when mysticism flickered out. All the interests in art and in life upon which the Jeunes flourished were derived from mysticism ; all the new things with which their heirs have replaced those dead things are explained by the passing of mysticism. Neither in art nor in life is there anything mystical about the heirs of the Jeunes. In art, they have set up, in the place of Decadent-



ism, Symbolism, Naturism and all other "isms," a doctrine of craftsmanship, which at the best produces extreme specialized culture and high technical skill, and at the worst makes for "shop" and literaturitis; in life, for themselves, instead of Naturism and a mystic faith in existence, they have only one official and actual doctrine, Arrivism, the doctrine of getting on, and for others, instead of mystic Anarchism and Individualism, they have definite political programmes and active political organizations. The two things that most mark the difference between the Jeunes and their heirs is the revival of an exclusively literary spirit and the revival of the purely political spirit: both revivals are proofs of the death of mysticism.

Young realists of to-day have no time for mystery in art or in life. In life they are young boulevardiers (the Jeunes had shaken the dust of the boulevard asphalt off their feet), young politicians (the Jeunes had the greatest contempt for politicians of all ages), "Camelots du Roy" (the Jeunes would have preferred bomb-throwing to pasting up portraits of the Duke d'Orléans in public lavatories as propaganda), or Arrivists (the Jeunes, many of them, have "arrived," but while they were young they dreamt other dreams than getting on). In art they are above all perfect young men of letters. All the old philosophies (they seem ancient now) of the Jeunes have turned to literature. Mallarmé's cry, at an Oxford lecture, "*la littérature seule existe*," echoed for a while, began to seem already ghastly to the Jeunes a few years after he had uttered it, though many of them were his disciples. If he could repeat it to-day, it would sound quite natural and up-to-date. The mistake was often made of taking the Jeunes to be purely literary, to be young prigs of literary snobbishness. Even the Symbolists before them and the Decadents before the Symbolists were not



slaves to the literary craft. All thought they were doing something by writing, the Jeunes thought of course they were doing most; none of them, the Jeunes least of all, looked upon the world solely as copy. The exclusively literary standpoint was seldom as often and as narrowly taken, except in the clique of the Parnassiens, as it is among the young men of to-day. It is a fact that the heirs of the Jeunes never write for the purpose of regenerating mankind; the Jeunes hardly ever wrote to any other end. When they were most absurd, when they rioted in strange and shoddy Babylonian splendour of falsely picturesque language and hastily vamped-up Rosicrucian lore with the Sar Péladan, or revelled in prose poems about sex after Whitman, who would have shuddered if he had known what his lush innocence had been turned to, they were still absurd for a cause, they held the fate of mankind in their hands, and either the glorification of sex or the worship of the rose and cross were the only salvation. Their heirs are very rarely absurd and all they have retained of the absurdities of their elders is material for pleasant and accomplished writing. In the place of all the "Jeunes revues" are magazines almost all grown up and quiet, the the most important of which all teach almost solely the religion of the literary man. The former preached nearly every imaginable other religion, preached in the best literary style available, but preached. The latter have far too much taste to preach. The chief young men's magazines of to-day \* are rigidly and exclusively confined to belles-lettres and actually have no other purpose. The editors positively do not care what their contributors'

\* *Vers et Prose*, for instance, which is purely literary, and the now almost venerable *Mercure de France*, which prides itself on wide and recondite learning, as well as on a strict and impartial devotion to the literary spirit.

religion or philosophy may be ; if the paper has literary value they print it, if not it is rejected. So extraordinary an editorial policy was unknown in the days of the *Jeunes*. The first thing a *Jeune* editor asked was what an intending contributor thought upon world mysteries. If his religion were that of the magazine his paper was then considered ; if not it could not even be looked at. In a *Naturist* review, for example, founded for the praise of life, the greatest poem in the language could not be printed if it praised ceasing upon the midnight with no pain. To-day many editors actually exist to whom life or death are indifferent as literary themes and to whom the way the poem is written is the only thing that matters : such literary bigotry would have revolted the *Jeunes*. Their heirs have quietly squeezed all the literary religions of their predecessors and extracted from each with much sagacity what drops it had of purely literary essence. They do not hate past literary religions as the *Jeunes* did, they have adapted them. They look up with an equally wise eye on Symbolism, Decadentism, even upon the *Parnassiens*, even upon the French Romantics, and their eclecticism not only embraces, but welcomes French Classicism. Out of Symbolism and Decadentism, considered as literary methods, they have selected much valuable matter, daring imagery, and many free and happy metres invented by the Symbolists, the only inventors in that field. Many of the *Jeunes'* hatreds are dead to them. The *Parnassiens* were particular foes of the *Jeunes*, hated by them and hating them, fearing them also, for the *Jeunes* could have had the patronage of the *Parnassiens* for the asking, but received all overtures with nastily satiric jibes which were cleverer than anything of the kind the *Parnassiens*, on the whole an ingenuously literary school, had ever themselves thought of. The *Parnassiens* have left no enemies behind them among

the heirs of the Jeunes. These do not go quite so far as to call more than a few lines of what François Coppée wrote poetry, but the memory of poor Coppée, who was the butt of the Jeunes, is not execrated. They are too wise in these days to execrate anyone: they take everyone's measure and will sift every man's work for you with diabolical husbandry. Victor Hugo, whose verse most Jeunes regarded as the negation of poetry, an opinion fairly well justified in respect to about half of it, has been reinstated in the last few years, and the astounding thing was seen lately of a representative young writer proclaiming that the most beautiful poem in the French language is the "Légende des Siècles." Ten years ago such an opinion would have killed its man, relegated him among the Philistines. But the heirs of the Jeunes have judged French Romanticism as all other "isms" with a cool eye, and found a soul of good in things evil, some poetry in a great deal of bombast. Their elders could not be spoken to on the subject of the Romantiques, Victor Hugo fifteen years ago was seldom read by a self-respecting literary youth, the preface to "Cromwell" was a good joke and Victor Hugo's "Shakespearean" dramas bad jokes, as they certainly are; anti-Hugolatry became a religion, the unfortunate grand old man of French verse ten years or so after his death was torn down from his pedestal and kicked to bits, and hardly a line he wrote was spouted save in derision. The successors of these absolute young men are more indulgent. They make allowances for the foibles of the French Romantics as for those of everyone else, and they willingly acknowledge that there is some good to be got out of them. As they have extracted some imagery and some fancy from Symbolism and Decadentism, so they have kept what the Parnassiens could give them of neat realism in careful verse, throwing away the platitudes, and have had their

profit of the Romantiques' ingenuous imagination and unsophisticated fire, writing off the rhetoric as dead loss. They practise an admirably balanced economy, and have come after a time that had a religious hatred of balance. In art, they promise to be the careful heirs of all the ages of French literature, and that probably will remain the mark of their day. They are producing the most eclectic all-round purely literary young generation of writers yet known since the seventeenth century, one that will never lose its head over a cause, but will always ask itself, "Is it one we can write artistically about?" and will never be thoughtless enough to be religious, enthusiastic, and passionate at the expense of taste, as the Jeunes were who considered that taste had a dash of the Everlasting No about it. They have not only drawn up a careful estimate of their near predecessors, but have gone back to French Classicists and overhauled them also with an eye to business. Their immediate predecessors had wiped out the French seventeenth century almost entirely, except La Fontaine who is for all time in France, and Molière who is for all time everywhere, and retained nothing of Corneille, and not much more of Racine than did Théophile Gautier who pretended to believe that his most beautiful line was "*La fille de Minos et de Pasiphae*." They have solemnly discovered Racine, who has been reinstated in the last ten years to something like the place he held for a century and a half. There are hopes that they will discover Corneille also in time; Racine is already back again in his place as a pattern of the "classic" French poet—the very term roused anger in the Jeunes. They do not aim at being classic French poets, having learnt also what other schools, from the Romantiques to the Parnassiens, had to teach them, but they always keep the seventeenth century "classic" ideal in view among others, and half an eye on Racine. The



rugged and passionate splendour of an Emile Verhaeren has admirers, luckily for the admirers, but they also turn with satisfaction to the cool restraint and intelligently sober imagination of Racine. Jean Moréas, who after sowing his Symbolist wild oats became almost a second Racine, would never have died in the same circle of fame from young men as well as academicians had he died ten years ago, having done the same work. He was something of a prophet of the New Classicism; he would have polished delicate verse in the wilderness among the Jeunes. All the work that brought him fame was purely classic, in the French seventeenth-century sense. It was accepted as master work by the heirs of those Jeunes who would have called it effete and bloodless; its not too loudly swept strings even sounded fresh and sweet to ears long struck by the crash of poetries that each were prophecies of faith. Perhaps in truth the heirs of the Jeunes grew up tired of strenuously ideal sincerity and turned with relief to self-conscious art whose greatest sincerity is in its technique. Their elders, young and rash, were a little impatient of technique, prose poems were dashed off and the fury of inspiration could not stop to polish, the pure gold in a Walt Whitman might have shone less true had he taken pains to refine his false coinage of words. Their elders were a great deal younger than ever they have been, they have a ripened and sober literary taste. All the old battles for "free" versification have died out, and all the revolutions in French prosody, all the magna opera which were to have drawn up the charter of the indefinable and uncontrollable *vers libre* are out of date. Some licenses invented in the *vers libre* have passed into current usage: rhyming for the ear alone and not also "to the eye" (e.g. a singular rhyming with a plural having an unsounded "s") assonance instead of rhyme,



the omission in scansion of terminal mute "e" syllables followed by a consonant, the combination of lines of various lengths. But "free" versification is now only optional, whereas ten years ago it was compulsory. No Jeune would have dared to compose a regular Alexandrine line; the Jeunes' successors look with favour again upon the traditional and rigid Alexandrine verse of the seventeenth century and as often as not write it according to strict rule by preference. The other day the *vers libre* was heard for the first time in history at the Comédie Française—last spring in an act by M. Henri Bataille—but that is only a proof of its having gone out of fashion. With the return of a purely literary spirit, the capacity for enjoying the particular pleasures of strictly regular French verse has come back. The law-loving Parnassiens who tremblingly ventured upon one license, the division of a twelve-syllable line into three equal parts by two cæsuras instead of in two by one, have not yet been reached again in the reaction, but the taste for the amusement of moulding into a few definite and precise forms the infinite material of poetry has been reacquired. It had been completely lost and was despised by the Jeunes, who were infinitely more occupied with the infinity of poetic material than with finite forms. Their heirs have reawakened for instance to the particular and purely literary joys of the sonnet, the rigid French sonnet. A Jeune never wrote a sonnet, the idea of having to write fourteen lines because you had to and of fitting them with five rhymes because five rhymes there were to be, was to him absurd, and to obey rules formed without regard for the convenience of his poetic material, which might be such as to require expression in a thirty-odd syllable poem of Japanese form or might run to an epic, seemed to him monstrous; poetry was a religion in which the spirit was everything, the form a detail. The purely literary pleasure,

a highly civilized and perhaps rather decadent pleasure, of playing with the difficulties of severe technical laws, the more strictly observed that the pleasure may be the greater, has been completely rediscovered. The *vers libre*, more or less amorphous—chiefly because the tonic accent in the French language is often uncertain and almost always slight—is of course still written, but the honoured old Alexandrine is in its honoured place again; ten years ago it was never to be heard more; now it is as much as ever a question whether it will not outlive all *vers libres* eventually.

Form and thought breed one another; with the Alexandrine line have returned the “classic” ideals of literature in the French sense. “I call classics the poets of reason,” “Reason is infallible . . .” “The universal and immutable poetic ideal consists in uniting the sublimity of reason with the wonders of speech,” “Reason endows poetry and criticism with the character of that which is divine,” “Criticism seeks, poetry paints, reality,” “The French alone in the modern world have attained to the height of the poetry of reason,” are axioms I quote from a successor\* of the *Jeune* reviews of old, though it is infinitely more grown-up than those ever were. Such sage sayings would have been impossible ten or fifteen years ago. Such worship of the goddess Reason would have been unthinkable—and in writing of poetry too! The *Jeunes* would have thanked no one for congratulating the French nation upon having attained to the height of the poetry of reason, whatever that poetry may be. These maxims, no doubt without having at all set out to perform the duty, make curiously representative watchwords for the literary heirs of the *Jeunes*. Not one word in them (those quoted or the rest of the collection) of mystery in poetry: mystery is dead,

\* *Vers et Prose*, Vol. XIX, 1909.

not so much as a word for its decent burial, and a decade ago young literature lived on mystery. Poetry to-day is the "painting of reality" and "the sublimity of reason," and the latter will no doubt soon be rediscovered in Corneille as the former has been in Racine. Poetry is a sane art of well-thought-out measure and nice taste, a clear-eyed rational art, a thinking moral art, but no religion. The heirs of the Jeunes are the most literary generation France has known for a long time, but they may be losing something by lacking the mysticism of their elders, and they may be missing the wood for the trees: the poetry which is the sublimity of reason may find itself without that indefinable something which is not reason and which makes poetry. Some very valuable pages in Mr. Arthur Symons's perversely named work \* might be given out as a text-book to the heirs of the Jeunes by any one who had the teaching of them, if they allowed anyone to teach them, which is in the last degree improbable. They might learn again the sense of mystery, which the Jeunes had, if they had nothing else. If they do get completely rid of it, they may do infinitely more for letters than the vague and absolute Jeunes ever did, but there will be less poetry in their achievements than there was in the latter's dreams.

Art has no mysteries left for the heirs of the Jeunes. In literature they are sagacious critics, historiographers, bibliographers, and their periodicals, from the *Mercure de France* to the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, are full of the intelligent siftings of their research work which for originality and thoroughness puts the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres to shame; upon the graphic and plastic arts they write compendiously and learnedly—one is glad to say, however, with violent prejudices as far as contemporary art is concerned; in musical criticism they have

\* *The Romantic Movement in English Literature.*

long since thrown over literary and philosophic impressionism, and only a belated and effete Jeune nowadays ventures to be untechnical: in all the arts they unite specialization with eclecticism, specialization of individual practice and eclecticism of general taste, and in no art have they the gorgeously vague religiousness of the Jeunes. The advancement of learning is greatly to be admired, but one cannot help a tender feeling for the truculent enthusiasms that are gone.

In life, as in art, the psychology of the heirs of the Jeunes is explained by the passing of mysticism; everything in their practice for their own lives and in their theory for the lives of others is accounted for by the same cause. In the management alike of their own affairs and of other people's, they are determined young realists. No dreams, individual or social, for them: no dreams in their own lives, no Utopias for mankind. They want reality for themselves and will allow only reality to others; they do not ask to get out of the world, they do not want to fade away into the forest dim, and they cannot therefore see why they should indulge such vague emotion in others. The death of mysticism has produced Arrivism in the individual and political realism in his attitude towards society. In life, the Jeunes were not essentially ambitious and were essentially not politicians and their heirs are essentially both.

The young Arrivist in general deserves a place of honour or at least of eminence in any gallery of French types of to-day, and he has been described on an earlier page. He is not always an heir of the Jeunes, but a particular variety of him is, which is characteristic both of his type and of his times. He had very few forbears among the Jeunes, for the latter have had in after years to confess that their minds in their twenties were not much troubled about getting on. They were so busy regenerating the world that they often



forgot to conquer it, and they talked as if the world were at their feet for them to shatter and remould, but often found out afterwards that it wasn't at all. All the heirs of the Jeunes are not arrivists and all arrivists are not heirs of the Jeunes by any means, but the spirit of Arrivism has a vigour about it to-day which it never had in the days before the word was invented. It first showed signs of healthy growth towards the end of the Jeunes' era, and of all the "isms" of the latter Naturism by an apparent paradox first fostered it. "Returning to nature" and "arriving" seem contradictory; but you returned to nature to praise life, to praise life you had to have plenty of it in you, and to prove that you had plenty you had to assert yourself. Of course the Jeunes asserted themselves mystically, an exceedingly ingenuous method of push, and an Arrivism which attacks effete philosophies and corrupt ideals with truculent professions of faith does not practically arrive very far. They have improved methods vastly in these days. First conquer your world, is the maxim of a far abler procedure, and it sometimes is, first catch your world. Do not tilt at it as the Jeunes did with the arm of faith and clamours of wrath and hope; humour it, play with it, play up to it, play down to it, above all be of the world. The Jeunes never were, and generally looked upon it as an enemy, if not the enemy; their heirs as a rule consider it kindly, and the arrivists among them eye it with genuine affection. They have in not much more than a decade returned to a great number of things which their elders had forsaken, from which in fact they had turned with loathing. They have rediscovered the boulevards, Parisianism, the play, the salon, rediscovered Paris in fact. The Paris of Parisianism was hated by their elders, whom few amiable remarks from a friendly foreigner could vex more than his praise of Parisianism. That was as dead as the *vie de*



*bohême* of the Latin Quarter. The *vie de bohême* is still as dead as ever, but Parisianism has been revived by the heirs of the Jeunes. They are seen on the boulevards, where there is a café or two which they do not avoid as the sinks of sceptical levity that corrupts faith ; they go to boulevard plays (where indeed are the evenings of l'Œuvre's famous symbolic performances, when in corduroys and Florentine robes the audience roared its rapture at a symbol and always wound up by hooting " Uncle Sarcey," who never could understand a symbol ?)—and they put on evening dress ; they do not even at all mind, in fact they like, being asked into newspaper offices, and they actually take their hats off to influential journalists, whom their elders looked upon as the more pernicious minions of the Everlasting No the more influential they were ; they go into Society and recite poems in Duchesses' drawing-rooms, never having heard of the anathema pronounced a decade or so ago upon the art, the literature, the philosophy, the religion, and the soul of " the world." They are in the " monde " as they are of the world, they no longer live in an isle of their own (that of the Jeunes seemed sometimes to them enchanted) cut off from the men who have succeeded and the men who are struggling, from the men who have captured the public, the men who are earning their bread, and those who have bread to give. There is no more talk of fervent monasteries where brotherhoods of the Jeunes were to retire, think, and create o' week-days, possibly reserving the Sabbath for relaxation, and it might be for the society of ladies, who in those times were not admitted to the sports of the intellect because they did not think mystically. There are no more brotherhoods such as communed over tea and ideas, gathered round a philosophic thought, and were held together by faith ; each of which cultivated a mystic sympathy and shut out all but a dozen elect at most, among

whom two words were enough to express a metaphysical truth and half a sentence ample for an entire doctrine, and each of which believed it was remaking the world. There seems to be less comradeship among the heirs of the Jeunes, or at all events their friendships are much more sensible affairs. They do not swear high compacts against the world, for the very good reason that they generally want to have the world with them. Most of them are decided young men of the world, who mean to get on, and do. To-day even the young philosopher, the young idealist, the pious young Christian, the exquisite young poet want to get on, and they show great ability to do it. They are not common arrivists with an amazing genius for bluff; their ability, their accomplishments, their intellectual equipment are genuine. They do not try to get on by false pretences, and they have every right to get on; the difference between them and their elders is that the latter, generally as well armed intellectually, bore flaming banners into the bargain, and often thought more of waving them than of winning. The heirs of the Jeunes are bent first of all on winning the battle. The most developed type of intellectual arrivist is perhaps even more remarkable, though sometimes perhaps less remarkably successful, than the common arrivist or bluffer. He has specialized of course in one or two particular subjects—perhaps Annamite architecture and the anecdotal history of French literature from 1815 to 1850 for example—upon which nobody can beat him, but he has also clear and precise notions of almost every other under the sun. There is no topic at all events in which he can be caught napping. He has something at least sensible and often judicious to say upon everything. His elders had ideas upon everything, but it is hardly enough to say that they jumped to conclusions; they considered only the conclusions of all things, and whatever they had to say

upon anything quickly worked round to an argument in proof of a faith, just as for the ingenious theologian there is naught in nature, even to the quarters of an orange, which is not evidence of Divine design : they had ideas upon every subject under the sun, but they swept all subjects into their faiths without bothering about the inessential details of knowledge. The frightening thing about the young intellectual arrivist of to-day is that he knows : no convenient generalities and a priori belief for him. He has got up in its essentials every subject on which he has anything—and there are few on which he has nothing—to say, and with due caution and reserve can hold his own against an expert. He has “ placed ” every subject a good deal more effectually as a rule than the expert has, and you can spring no idea upon him which he has not already fitted into his practical scheme of the universe. What he says, moreover, he says extremely well : he has a command of precise, fluent, exact, and adequate language which would stagger his English contemporary just down from Oxford. He is never at a loss, he is never carried away, he never gives himself away, he is never ingenuous or bumptious or rash ; he never advances an argument without having another to back it, never speaks on trust, is never tempted by the adventures of paradox, he does not lay down the law, he is always modest, definite and clear. He never shows off, always shows to the best advantage, and always cuts just the figure that will best help him on in the world. He is the most finished young sage there ever was : one almost prefers, sometimes, his brother the bluffer, the common arrivist who at least is picturesque. There are moments when the intellectual arrivist strikes one as hardly human, as only a machine for getting on. He is not even merely an intellectual prig, and he knows that bookishness never won the real world he wants to win. That is why he has gone

back to the boulevards, where he can talk quite well down to the level of the boulevardier, to the play where he has as good a manner for an actress's dressing-room as any of the young millionaires who keep her, into society where it is far more necessary to be seen in certain drawing-rooms, after you have brought out a book, than to have written the book. There is no accomplishment of use to him from erudition to small talk which he does not use with great skill. If he does not get on nobody will. What he will get on to, the future will show ; in the meantime, France has in him a remarkable type of a remarkable generation, a pattern of young man of exceedingly sharp intelligence and uncommonly comprehensive and penetrating intellect, exceptional cultivation, brilliant talents, vitality as strong as his ambition, and no enthusiasm.

The heirs of the Jeunes have killed mysticism in their own lives, and in their theories for the lives of others as well. Their rules for the management of their own lives and the principles on which they would take society in hand do not correspond exactly, but have one character in common—realism. A characteristic of the generation which had not gone up to college ten years ago is the revival of the political spirit. Politics for young men of parts have become a creditable occupation and interest only within the last decade or so. The accepted idea that French public life is on the down grade is in this respect at all events the contrary of the truth. In the days of the Jeunes a taboo lay on the political world, among young men with the slightest pretension to intelligence and culture ; its ideas, its men, and its activities were ignored. The subject of the day's politics was barred in conversation, parliamentary leaders were hardly ever known by name, and the entire activity of the political world was held to be not of the smallest interest or importance. The



Jeunes would have been amazed to be told that their heirs would follow parliamentary debates, busy themselves about M. Clemenceau or M. Briand, and discuss proportional representation. They looked always beyond the mere practice of politics. The latter they considered to be carried on squalidly in actual fact, but to be also squalid business by nature. The average politician's want of intelligence exasperated them and the spuriousness of his ideals revolted them. If they had any political doctrine at all, it was Anarchism. The morning after Vaillant threw his unoffending bomb into the Chamber of Deputies, I remember meeting a representative party of the Jeunes in exultation: here was a man who had done something, not enough, but something. They lived in an ecstatic fever of hope that at last the great cataclysm was coming, out of which society would emerge more beautiful, or less hideous. Throughout the period of Anarchist bomb-throwing, the bomb-throwers absolutely carried with them the sympathy of young intellectual France, and Laurent Tailhade's "What matter a few vague humanities, if the gesture be beautiful?" when a bomb cut off half a dozen such vague human lives, was derided afterwards—especially after Laurent Tailhade himself had been nearly blinded by another bomb when dining in an expensive restaurant—but it was applauded when it was said. Politically the Jeunes cared only for dreams, which were generous dreams, though they sound rather bloodthirsty and very absurd, and their heirs care only for realities. Their heirs are far too sensible to be Anarchists, and by a coincidence which may not be accidental—for the moods of a nation are traversed by curious currents of sympathy running from soured and fanatical tramps to young B.A.'s of the bourgeoisie—Anarchism throws no more bombs. They have only a superior pity for Utopias. They have re-



discovered practical politics; they have rediscovered the balance of European power, the need for armaments, the value of alliances, they have rediscovered patriotism, a sensible matter-of-fact patriotism, whereas their elders were anti-patriots and anti-militarists. Anti-militarism and anti-patriotism have not increased but greatly diminished in France since some working men's associations took them up, for they have ceased to exist among the educated youth. The latter are too practical politicians not to accept military service, which their elders derided and cursed as a degradation and a slavery, and peace societies which had a following among the Jeunes have next to none among their heirs.

The heirs of the Jeunes have re-fashioned for themselves a practical political spirit. They include in their midst several political types none of which were known to their elders. The young international politician solemnly engrossed in world politics, the young sociologist who has discovered that sociology is a science, the young political man of action who has been in the thick of it since he was sixteen, are all new types which make the once Jeunes feel very old. The first is a magnificent young wiseacre; he has primed himself in the Balkans, the Near East, the Dual monarchy, the Far East, the Future of the Latin races, English budgets, the Trend of American thought, and inclines to taking Mr. Roosevelt seriously. He has it all at his finger-tips, and he has the greatest faith in it all. The oldest fictions of diplomacy have not forfeited his respect; the most involved and most often violated treaties are familiar to him, and he knows exactly when and how they were violated. He really has absorbed an enormous mass of documentary learning which he has digested and assimilated. When he starts writing on world politics in the Press, he is the terror of pleasant attachés at

the Quai d'Orsay, whom he consults in theory but in practice instructs, and who alternately fret at being taught much more diplomatic history than they at all want to learn and dread it being discovered by him that they don't take themselves seriously. He is a very accomplished young man whose only fault is that he takes world politics and himself in dead earnest, but it is one he may grow out of.

The second type has the same sort of mind. He has not only discovered sociology, but has ascertained that it is a science. For dreamers from Bakunin to William Morris he entertains sometimes a pitying, sometimes a furious contempt; thus the poetry of News from Nowhere must without doubt excite in him particular indignation, for imagination has no business in social science. He is scientific beyond everything. He studies the mob, plutocracy, aristocracy, the upper intellectual strata of mankind, in the abstract. He proceeds regularly by induction and deduction, and builds a theory; it is essential that he should have built at least one of his own by the time he is twenty-five. He develops it rigorously in severely close and logical language, supplemented by copious diagrams, curves, and tables. He achieves the difficult feat of writing dully in stodgy French about the most interesting traits in the French people, and some of the young reviews of to-day are filled with sociological studies of his, which are almost German in their weighty compendiousness. He also is a young man of remarkable parts, but he is not amusing.

The third type of politician is. He is the young politician militant, who has sprung up almost mushroom-like not in a decade, but in half, and is a growth of which the Jeunes had never dreamt. He is even more precocious in politics than the Jeunes were in mysticism, and if a muscular boy,

has sometimes begun his active career at sixteen by hitting his history master for having spoken disrespectfully of Louis XV, for instance, or in extenuation of the French Revolution. The "manifestation" instantly gets into the papers, the Conservative Press drags the master through the mire and interviews the young patriot, who thereupon leaves school to begin a political career. After a "King's hawker" has been demonstrating for years, one learns that he has just gone up for the conscription, that is to say he is one-and-twenty. It is characteristic of a generation that has killed mysticism that the young politician militant is never on the unsafe side. He never does battle for generous dreams, which were the only form the political spirit ever took among the Jeunes; he is most militant in the cause of reaction. He battles for the downtrodden classes oppressed by the masses, for martyred Roman Catholic financiers groaning under the tyranny of Jews who are making more money than they, for patriots ground under the heel of traitors: he is the young champion of safe causes, those which are advertised by political parties with nothing to do but to keep up agitation at any price, and which are perfectly safe because they never will be advanced beyond the agitation stage and never will cost their defenders their lives, liberties, or comforts. The perhaps unprecedented spectacle is seen of militant political youth devoting their animal spirits to the defence of the social order which nobody threatens; hitherto the natural thing had been for youth to threaten it. The Roman Catholic revival among the heirs of the Jeunes is no less realist; practical the young political militant cannot properly be said to be, for it seems unlikely that any of his campaigns will ever win him any plunder, but idealist he certainly is not, for what he aims at, on his own behalf or on behalf of his cause, is the plunder, though it is a hundred to one

against his ever getting it. The religious young man of to-day among the heirs of the Jeunes has killed mysticism perhaps even more effectually even than his fellows. The Roman Catholic revival of a month or two among the Jeunes sprang from their natural religiousness, and it died because they found the political church to be considerably less religious than they; the present undoubtedly strong Roman Catholic revival among their successors came the other way about. Its derivation is purely political and the political Church of Rome in France leads it. Sincere piety is of course not rare, but the difference is that the Jeunes were religious naturally though violently unorthodox, whereas their heirs were naturally irreligious when the political spirit moved many of them towards religion, whom the Church of Rome then took in hand. Not naturally religious, the young Roman Catholic party is violently orthodox according to the tenets of the political church of to-day. The primitive Christian counsel against ostentatious prayer is rigorously discountenanced. On church festivals pious youths assemble, motor in battalions to the Madeleine, and march, through an admiring crowd on the steps, in to pray. They come out aggressively, as who should say, "We have indeed prayed, and if any infidel objects, we will learn the reason why." There is not even a French Freemason on the steps to object, unfortunately, and the secret grievance of the young church party is that no one does prevent their praying. After Mass they reassemble in the upper room of some old and demure café of the Boulevard St. Germain mysteriously, and there plot darkly against the Republic, speaking often in coded language for fear of Freemasonry. It would be quite needless to spy on them of course, if anyone wanted to, for the entire café knows exactly what they are doing. What are they doing? Their darkest schemes are one for



invading the "right bank" in a column over a hundred strong, to the cry of "Vive le Roi!" and another for pasting portraits of the Duke d'Orléans in all the lavatories of socialist Belleville at the same moment. They do not appear to be a serious danger to the Republic. Yet it is a remarkable, and it might be a serious, thing that the militant politicians among the heirs of the Jeunes should all be on the side of reaction.\* No doubt Republican youth,

\* Among twenty or so small magazines of to-day, which have succeeded the reviews of the Jeunes and are no longer called "jeunes revues," at least half are more or less Reactionary in politics, and more or less closely allied to the political church party. *Le Sillon* is (or was, for the Vatican has just rewarded its promoter by a tart rebuke and a peremptory order, meekly obeyed, to disband his forces and hand them over to the sole authority of the clergy) the "organ" of a young political group of the same name, which consisted of M. Marc Sangnier first and foremost and his followers humbly in the background, and which in the pursuit of a shadowy goal of Roman Catholic democracy, vaguely democratic but rigorously Roman Catholic, affected to hold the Royalist and other reactionary parties at arm's length and tried to coquet with labour parties, succeeding only with skeleton workmen's unions built up laboriously by go-ahead militant churchmen. *La Plume politique et sociale*, which has taken and improved the name of the dead *Plume* (which was a much more important, purely literary magazine of the Jeune period and before), affects to be purely literary, but is political and reactionary, with "patrons" drawn from militant Royalists. *Les Entretiens idealistes* is Roman Catholic, but opposed to "l'Action Française," the daily newspaper of the most truculent young Royalists, M. Léon Daudet, for instance, and the "Camelots du Roy," and appears to be connected with "l'Action libérale," not a newspaper, but a Parliamentary party of Roman Catholic Conservatives who do not profess to be against the Third Republic. *La Revue critique*, under cover of loftily impartial social criticism, is Royalist, and supports the "Action Française." *Les Guêpes* look literary, but print twelve times a year on their yellow cover a demonstration of the guilt of Major Dreyfus. *Les Flèches* affect to have a dig at every party, including the truculent Conservatives who advocate Anarchist methods, but the magazine has evidently reactionary sympathies and is Roman Catholic. "Traditionalism" and "Neo-Classicism" in literature appear often to go hand in hand with Reactionary politics.



if a danger arose, would rise also and meet it, and in a fight I think I should back the Republicans. But for the time being Republican youth makes no attempt to rise, nor indeed any motion at all, leaving the field entirely to revolutionary young Royalists and violent young champions of "social order." The latter have done no one any harm so far and will no doubt continue quite harmless, yet if they go on canvassing unopposed they may canvass with success, and in the end the majority of cultivated young France may be won over at least to the same ineffectual, and perhaps to a more efficient, political reactionarism. The militant political youth of to-day is thus twice removed from the Jeunes : the latter in politics despised the matters of fact and cared only for the dreams, but there was a method in their dreams, for these were always on the side of greater freedom and greater humanity ; their political heirs ignore dreams, asking only for realities, and reality to

*La Revue libre* and *Les Rubriques nouvelles* champion "Traditionalism" in literature and in life, the former being more positively reactionary in politics than the latter. Only *Pan*, very slight for its name, is politically "advanced." *Le Centaure* is a relic of Naturism, and sadly publishes recollections of that strenuous movement. The rest of the "young reviews" of to-day that are no longer "jeunes revues" are purely literary, like *Vers et Prose*, the most important of them, and in fact hardly a "young review" at all, *La Nouvelle Revue française*, which may be said to rank next, *La Phalange* and the obscure *Occident*, all the latter three having, however, vague Roman Catholic, or at all events, decidedly anti-Voltairian leanings, the sedate *Revue du temps présent*, *Les Actes des Poètes*, the sensible *Ile Sonnante*, despite its name, the insignificant *Renaissance romantique*, which affords only too clear a proof that French Romanticism is dead, *L'Art libre*, and *Le Beffroi* ; or, like *Le Spectateur*, aim at scientific sociology, as do *Le Mercure de France*, though principally literary, and *La Revue des Idées*, mostly philosophic, neither of which are "young reviews" at all. One or two of them, *La Renaissance contemporaine*, for instance, and especially (though published at Marseilles) *Le Feu*, are purely "Parisian," as no "jeune revue" of old ever was.

them is the reaction of the social order against life, of tradition against new aspirations, and of authority against liberty.

In the heirs of the Jeunes France has a new generation which in art and in life is exceedingly able and informed, and cultivates both with talent and industry ; which has carried the literary life and the art of getting on to an equally high degree of advancement, and has improved the literary spirit and rediscovered the political spirit, but a generation which is not one of great faiths.

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## *XV. The French Stage of To-day*

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### I

**A**NOTHER book on France ?" said a French friend who was a "Jeune" ten years ago. "I tell you what. Call it 'In the Chantecler Country.'" This was really meant as a gibe even more at M. Edmond Rostand than at me. The strangest fate that a play ever knew befell "Chantecler." Where foreign opinion extolled, French opinion damned. Not a Frenchman in a hundred, critic or shopkeeper, had a good word to say for it, and the more typically French the shopkeeper or the critic was, the more he "slated" "Chantecler." It was kept going on the bills solely by French people who, having read it, wanted to see it to be able to run it down with better knowledge, and by foreign visitors of whom one-tenth at most could follow it. No play was ever so universally condemned in its own country. Its faults are as glaring as its puns, but French judges deliberately shut their eyes to its merits. It only rarely approaches real poetry, and its heroic speeches often fall into the fustian of rhetoric. But is M. Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac," the biggest French dramatic success of modern times, real poetry, and is not every modern French drama in verse, from Victor Hugo to François Coppée, overladen with bombast? The very Frenchmen who called the delightful verbal games of "Cyrano" poetry, and whom the claptrap of "Pour la Couronne" stirred, condemned the euphuism and high falutin' of "Chantecler." The same who triumphantly discovered real poetry in "Cyrano" found the same thing in "Chantecler" and

called it false. There is little real poetry in the former, but there is not less in the latter, and the brilliant and pleasant playing with words which gives value to the one gives as much to the other, though hardly one French judge will say so. The qualities as well as the faults of "Chantecler" are peculiarly French, and French judges deny the former. French drama in verse has very rarely at any time been poetic, but the versified drama of no other nation has been as neat, deft, ingenious, and effective. Those are the very qualities which make "Chantecler" interesting. They appeal to the English spectator (when he understands them) precisely because they are peculiarly French. No English dramatist in any age has played so nimbly and prettily with words as some French dramatists have; the game is one at which the best among us are awkward. The ejaculatory dialogue of hens and chicks pecking at worms, the cock's fine conceit, the truculent hooting of the owls, the spiteful grumbling of the toads are all the factitious tricks of a juggler with words, but they are performed with superior skill, and they should amuse us as they amused him. This is not in the least the poetry and humour of nature—of *The Jungle Book*—but it is exceeding neat fooling, and exceeding deft versifying. "Chantecler" has nothing to do with the French drama of to-day, and France is the "Chantecler" country only because "Chantecler" proved no prophet in it. But "Chantecler" is peculiarly and essentially French all the same, and the strange fate that befell it means this: that the French spectator of to-day refused to admire one of the best examples of what French dramatic versifiers at all times have done best.

In the country which is not the "Chantecler" country, the stage has seldom been as interesting as it is to-day, perhaps because, while there have not been very many

more interesting days than ours, there has been none to which any stage has as flexibly shaped itself as the French stage to the French to-day. This may not be afterwards called a lofty or a great day ; it is a day full of varied life and full of nice shades and changing motion. The representative French drama of to-day is not heroic or eloquent drama, nor drama of real poetry, but it is the most representative of its day. The contemporary English drama that pays and is popular often seems still pleasantly unconscious of contemporary thinking. The German stage has had lyric bursts and spurts of Ibsenism along an even tenour of beaten paths. The Norwegian stage was Ibsen, who was not the whole of to-day. No one can be found to know whether there be an American drama ; at any rate, if there is one, it has not put upon the stage the poetry which Whitman saw in this day. The French stage seems to have missed the poetry of the present, but it has missed little else of its day. The poetic drama, never a French forte, is archaic or forced, rarely the real and natural thing, on the contemporary French stage. Catulle Mendès was dazzlingly euphuistic, had almost genius in affectation, and made the most wonderful paste brilliants ever seen. M. Zamacois has a pleasant daintiness and can turn a roundel better than any man. M. Rostand—even the great Edmond Rostand—has little real poetry in him : he is always at his trick of catching us with a flashy antithesis, his best things do not ring with absolute clearness and truth, and his less good, pleasing though they be, sound false. “Cyrano de Bergerac,” which sent all Paris and afterwards literary London mad, is only an amazing glitter ; “l’Aiglon” is a colossal building up of conceits, marvellously finished. “Chantecler,” which French judges damned, has peculiarly French qualities, but they are traditional, not original ; it gives the purely artificial pleasure, fresher, perhaps, to



English than to French ears, of keen verbal sport, which is an old French game, and what real poetry it has is not the poetry of to-day. I am not at all sure that French judges condemned it on that account, or that they at all think of asking the dramatic poet to sing to them the poetry of to-day, but one may as well give them the benefit of the doubt. Some of them appeared to find the poet of to-day in M. Henri Bataille, when he dreamed "A love evening's dream," the chief distinction of which was that when it was brought out the walls of the Comédie française, for the first time in history, heard irregular verse, with hiatus, assonance instead of rhyme, and without proper cæsuras. But it was a serious error, if not to look to M. Bataille for the poetry of the present, at all events to find it in "*Le Songe d'un soir d'amour*." Even in his prose, M. Bataille has been travelling towards an archaic romanticism, and further and further away from to-day and from what romance of its own this day may have. "*La Vierge folle*" took us into an Alfred de Musset country where hearts throbbed and the mind was busy only with counting each beat, where the only moments that existed were the paroxysms of sexual passion, and where men and women of all ages from eighteen to forty-two lived only for the frenzy of love and no one had any sense of humour. If this was the prose, what, then, was the verse? "*Lui*" was a Byronic man of letters who had slain many hearts, but had been jilted by the one woman who had enslaved him. "*Elle*" was his new love, and it was their first evening of love, but a dream was all it proved. "*L'ombre*," the ghost of the lady who had jilted him, came between "*Lui*" and "*Elle*," and whenever he tried to make love, the ghost said, "thou shalt not, thou still lovest me only and knowest it," and his courtship failed lamely. The ghost even came and blew out a match—a French match which the hero had

lit with difficulty—with which he was about to burn an old letter of hers at the new love's request. This was bad enough of the ghost, but what finished the love dream was the ghost's prompting "Lui" to say, when "Elle" asked him to fly with her at once, "I am afraid I don't love you enough," at which, naturally hurt, particularly as the ghost's existence remained throughout unknown to her, she showed him the door. M. Henri Bataille has not, I think, given us the poetic drama of the present.

The poetic drama is not the real French drama of to-day, and the French stage has not dreamed and realized the poetry of to-day—nor has any other.

But Paris on the stage—not in dramatic experiments, but in plays that pay, and pay well—has realized its own to-day, its own every day, marvellously. The French stage has now no "tendencies," no principles, no leading ideas, and does not know whither it is going—but it goes thither full-bloodedly and with keen life in its veins. There has never been more general intelligence on any stage. None has understood everyday men and the ordinary life of its age more truly, or mirrored them more really. None has been in closer relationship with the spirit of its time. Few periods have attained an equal strength of talent in play-writing, or the same level of intelligence in many branches of drama. As much cleverness seldom has been required from the playwright for success, and I am persuaded that the actor never was compelled to go as deeply into his own art as he must on the present Parisian stage.

The French drama has in this day completely given up trying to be any other thing than itself. It has once for all left the moral standpoint behind. It resolutely sets itself only one duty: to please as drama. Whatever of moral purpose it may have had in the past from Beaumarchais to Dumas *fils* it now determinedly drops. It has done with

the satire that chastens and with the castigating laugh, with ridicule that is to kill and with regenerating scorn. It does not whip the effete aristocracy because the crimson-blooded people is growling below, attack a class because Society is in travail, or show us up that we may reform. It has done not only with plain teaching, but with subtle teaching, and has done even with the problem that is set before us merely that we may see. It does not even state questions, does not even ask questions left unanswered. It asks nothing : it satirizes because satire is dramatic, it laughs because laughter is a thing of the stage, it is scornful when scorn tells behind the footlights, and uses ridicule when ridicule serves the theatre. It is drama and only drama ; it is only a spectacle on a stage to move us somehow, by laughter, tears, terror, pity, admiration. It is only an entertainment. But it is not an entertainment for babes or dullards.

A good play, after all, is all the present French stage, like the stage of Shakespeare, cares for. But there are good plays, and "good plays." Robertson wrote a few, and Victorien Sardou has written a few score, "good plays." There is no difference between M. Sardou's purpose and that of modern French dramatists, for they, as he, write to amuse. But there are different qualities of amusement. A man, who expecting a "good play" goes to a good play on the present French stage, will often suffer a bad after-dinner disappointment. The French stage is an entertainment, but not one for sucklings or dozers. The history of the stage seems to show that when the drama has been solely an entertainment, the quality of the entertainment has been highest. The Elizabethans sought only to give good plays, and the greatest of them was the most determined entertainer of them all. The French stage of to-day has not given us as good plays as Shakespeare's and he

still may amuse us more. But it gives entertainment of higher quality than has been given anywhere for several generations. Not everyone can be amused by it, and its merit is that it cannot altogether amuse everybody. The spectator cannot sit down passively to be amused, but must meet the play half-way. He must have been trained in the hard-won knowledge of how best to amuse himself. Everyone knows that to learn how to extract the finest entertainment out of the world costs pains, and that the game, which is well worth the candle, is no child's play. The fallow mind finds great difficulty in being really amused. A little amuses it, indeed, but not for long, and does not amuse it thoroughly and well. We must learn to be amused. We lose some simple joys, perhaps, but we enjoy more things more keenly. The present French stage requires us to learn to be amused by it, but it amuses us, having learnt, deeply and finely.

Dialogue has not been more finished, wit more ingenious, invention of situation livelier, study of character more intelligent, or the painting of atmosphere subtler, on any stage for a century, than on that of to-day in Paris. The Paris stage of yesterday fades far away. The good things of "*Le monde où l'on s'ennuie*," unique in their time, sound now tame, and Pailleron's satire in "*Cabotins*" is almost clumsy compared with the keener stuff of the present moment. The ingenuity of Sardou's seventy six plots is cold and shows the works, by the side of the crises in latter-day third acts. Emile Augier's types seem rough silhouettes, without shading, stage-made men without delicate humanity, when the *Comédie française* now puts them again on the boards. The atmosphere of the younger Dumas' plays is theatrical in the wrong sense, his social problems are almost crude, and his moral purpose even ingenuous. To carry the comparison over the Channel



home, and to set the English drama which was contemporary with the period from Augier to Dumas  *fils*  and Pailleron in France by the side of the French drama of to-day would be cruel. The English stage of to-day, indeed, would not come off very well in a parallel even with the French stage of yesterday.

The shrewd, delicate, and fierce satire in the drawing of Isidore Lechat in "*Les Affaires sont les Affaires*" passes all such paintings of character dating back two or three generations. The London stage with child-like simplicity gave itself away by reproducing exactly the skeleton of the play without its flesh and blood, slurring over all the subtle humanity in it and coarsening it all down the page. The humanity of "*La Veine*," "*Notre jeunesse*," "*la Châtelaine*," "*les Passagères*," the situations of "*la Rafale*," "*le Voleur*," "*Samson*," "*le Duel*," "*l'Autre danger*," "*le Dédale*," the pathos of "*Poliche*," the sentiment of "*la Massière*," the reality of "*les Hanneçons*," the wit of Maurice Donnay, the terseness of Paul Hervieu, the "atmosphere" of Alfred Capus, the stage instinct of Henry Bernstein, were not equalled in the past century.

The French stage of to-day has no purpose but one : to catch the fleeting spirit of its day. It is a day of great and delightful confusion. Ideas are broken up and particles of them are in the air. "The old faiths crumble and fall, and the new faiths ruin and rend." What modern man exactly knows where he is ? Classes are merged, the present is in labour, the past is past, and no one is sure that he has even plausible dreams of the future. In France where the order has been more fixed and ideas neater, more steadfast, more clear-cut than elsewhere, the mingling and shading off in the present are more intimate, deeper and subtler than elsewhere. To-day is a fleeting, uncertain, and marvelously rich and vivid day. The present French stage is



almost as varied and as alive as its day. I never forget the definition M. Capus gave me of "atmosphere" in a modern play. Ideas of the day (he believed) are not in themselves dramatic; to-day thinks much that can by no means be made into a play. But no play of to-day can afford to ignore what is thought by to-day. Its scene must be laid in its time and in the thoughts of its time. By no means make a play out of strikes, revolutions, the crumbling of old faiths; but the strikes and the revolutions are there, and the old faiths are crumbling in the wings: that we must feel. "No man of to-day has lived without talking of Socialism. When he comes on to the stage, we must feel that he has been talking of Socialism: that is atmosphere." M. Capus' illustration is to the point. We must feel that the modern man is modern. He must not bring his modern thoughts into our play if they are not—and they often are not—thoughts which the stage can use; but we must know by his other thoughts, his dramatic thoughts, that he has had those other thoughts of his day which we could not use for our purpose. He must bring in the air of the outer world, the world of to-day, on to our stage when he comes. Our stage is a slice of our world, and we must let it be known unmistakably that it is. How can we do it, and how can we create the atmosphere of a play? M. Capus knows, and has done it. He is not the only one, and the French stage is the essence of to-day. The English to-day is certainly as rich, as diverse, as finely confused, as gloriously inconsistent, as big with the future as the present in France. Why does the English stage so rarely catch the fleeting and vivid spirit of its day?

## II—PLAYWRIGHTS

THESE has not often been such a battalion of spies catching for the stage the spirit of their times, as Alfred Capus, Octave Mirbeau, Henry Bernstein, Paul Hervieu, Eugène Brieux, Henri Lavedan, Henri Bataille, Jules Lemaître, Maurice Donnay. . . . We could in England hardly bring the quarter of such a force into the field. The French stage itself has not known such varied strength for generations. Alfred Capus may be presumed to command to-day, for he is nothing if not of his day. He is smiling modernity, but smiling that it may not wince, as Figaro laughed for fear of crying. He is not only the lighter side of to-day, its brightness, its terror of solemnity, its shrinking from tragedy, its determined laughter and its two or three half jocose tears. He is the light surface of to-day, but he knows the things beneath. What is admirable in his plays is what they suggest. His men and women come into his play from the world and go out into it again when the play is over. The play itself is gay and light, and the optimism of the favourite Capus hero has become a byword. But you feel that much has passed beneath the levity and has remained in the depths of character, and the optimism is but making the best of things. That our to-day does, and we none of us groan and shout to heaven, but which of us is as gay as our forefathers in the storm and stress period were gay, when the Sturm und Drang had passed by, which it often did? In the plays of Capus something always runs, near or far away, beneath the surface : that is above all the quality of Capus. He lets us suspect what lies underneath our persistently cheerful to-day. He lets no tragedy rise to the top ; the

surface shines and sparkles pleasantly and charmingly. Not a solemn word, and not a tinge of melodrama : everything is measured, tasteful, free from violence, and is carried off amiably with a smile. The wit of the play amuses and its cheery humanity warms you ; when it is over, you think of it and it takes on a new gravity. The men and women are with you still and their lives are deeper than you supposed. They were witty and pleasant during the play, as one is cheerful and entertaining (if possible) in company ; but they are not all wit and all cheerfulness. Alfred Capus took them in a bright moment : they had others before and will have them afterwards. They are real men and women and have had their sorrows. Be cheerful, is the Capus philosophy. But you say that only to those who want cheering up. To some, one would say, " for God's sake, be sad for once," but not to Capus' men and women. They *must* be cheerful, for they have lived, they *shall* be taught optimism, for they need it, and courage to be bright to the world, for they face the world, not only the footlights. They pass before us in the play, but they lived before the play began. The Capusian optimist rules the play, but making the best of things is not at all a proof that the things are always good to us. Alfred Capus' stage takes the world on the smile, but there have been tears in the wings. No one amuses us more while the curtain is up ; when the footlights go out, we think of what the play suggests and are graver.

The hero of " *La Veine* " goes on to conquer because he has the " *veine* " and the belief in himself ; " *la Châtelaine* " is brought round to happiness because the man whom she meets knows how to force fate and compel the gods ; simple and indulgent humanity smoothes out the after-problems left by " *Notre jeunesse*," because a woman has large-heartedness and large faith in life ; " *Les*

Passagères," already graver, pass, and the man, less light-hearted, remains, yet strong, because another woman has the large heart and forgiving sympathy. But all these men and women have suffered, although they may not suffer much in the Capus plays : they suffered before the plays began, and that we feel. They do not come naked and lonely into the play, but they come with a life behind them. They are a part of the world outside the stage, they bring its air with them on to the boards : that is "atmosphere." Also, it is the atmosphere of to-day. Capus' men and women are of their day, not tragic nor sentimental ; taking things cheerfully and as they come, but remembering the undercurrent and moulded by what they remember ; putting their best leg foremost, but aware that they have not always stepped it so lightly ; optimists, but because they refuse to be pessimists. No other playwright has caught so well this wonderful surface of to-day, suggesting its depth ; none has implied so much so delicately. He may have harped upon the brightness and lightness of to-day, but he has given us also whispers of its solemnity.

Octave Mirbeau seizes this day by the throat and grapples with it. He has not the varied resources of Capus, he is a fighter and he must fight. He is a savage satirist and he assails tooth and nail. But he is not an inhuman Juvenal of the drama or a coldly furious scourge of sins and weaknesses. Even he, a castigator in deadly earnest, is first of all an entertainer. He writes satiric drama because he feels he can make satire dramatic. His "*Mauvais bergers*" hit out all round at modern men, but in spite of its crudeness was a real play. Isidore Lechat (in the original French of "*les Affaires sont les Affaires*," of course) is well and honestly alive, and no mere peg to hang vice and foolishness upon. His wife is no mere foil, but ex-

quisitely human. The play is not a lampoon, but a play. It whips and plays fiercely, it finds out and unmercifully baits the many Lechats of to-day, but above all it is human and it amuses.

Henry Bernstein takes by the throat not so much his day as his audience and shakes the breath out of it. He is the champion wrestling dramatist with rules of his own, and not a house has been known to resist him long—for more than an act or two. He does not care how he does it, but he must win and does. He plays with his foe awhile, the house thinks this time it will have Bernstein and rejoices—he never tried to be lovable—but he is only feinting. Some new twist of a muscle, some unexpected jiu jitsu trick, a hit below the belt or a catch against all the rules, and Bernstein has his audience down, beaten again. It picks itself up gasping during the *entr'acte*. Henry Bernstein has never failed yet. Every *répétition générale* of a new play of his has brought the same fight with the same finish. Every time the house, warily on its guard, thought now it would hold out—and Paris first-nighters with pleasant friendliness yearn for the evening when Henry Bernstein shall at last fail—and every time he trapped it with a new catch which it had never expected and threw it. He is the champion wrestler, but he is also the essential dramatist, limited to the footlights, for whom nothing seems to exist outside the drama, and nothing exists in the drama but the one dramatic crisis which will knock out his audience. All his plays have been built on the same pattern: preparation, as astute, sly, and foxy as may be; the crisis with the most violent discords obtainable; resolution, necessarily tame, and the briefer the better. The crisis is all the play and all author or audience care about. Character, ideas, surroundings, atmosphere, the author cares for them only as he can use them to work



up his crisis. The crisis over he has done with his *personæ* and with the world they live in, just as they sprang into his dramatic moment from nowhere, for aught we feel. He is essentially thus different from Capus.

None of his characters have the least importance as characters, or even existence outside the catastrophe for which he uses them. The cleaned-out gambler of a lover in "La Rafale" and the mistress who will save him at any cost to herself are neither new nor renewed by fresh observation. In "Le Voleur," no spectator cares to know why the wife is so made that she is capable of being a thief for love, and all we know or want to know about the husband is that he loves his wife. "Samson," the strong man of money who rose from the gutter, the haughty, aristocratic wife whom he bought, and the amiable blackguard, her lover, would be figures in bald outline, with little accent even of line, in a play of character. The world in which the Bernstein men and women move is also in itself indifferent. They are placed where they are because that position most conveniently provides the elements of the needful crisis. French society, decayed aristocracy, blustering finance, are not the interests of the play. The crisis would be interchangeable into any other society or people, not without readjustment of detail, but without detriment. The surroundings chosen are chosen merely because they offer the least line of resistance to the catastrophe; the catastrophe does not depend on them, any more than it arises out of character. Evidently the author's method is to imagine his crisis first and to work back afterwards to character and medium, forming both merely of the bare elements required for the make-up of the crisis. He puts out none of those extraneous feelers into the world outside his play, gives none of the irrelevant touches of pure humanity, which delight in Capus. His play is over when the footlights go out. Going

home, if one thinks of it, one thinks of it often with annoyance: Bernstein has had us again. The Capus play goes on playing in our minds, the Bernstein play is dead by the time we have gathered up our wraps.

Henry Bernstein is the dramatist *unius dramatis*, the entertainer with only one entertainment up his sleeve, but it is an unsurpassed entertainment of its kind.

No playwright ever before accomplished so well his feat of capturing an audience in spite of itself. With characters which we care not in the slightest about and out of surroundings which are not drawn to interest us in any study of manners and of mankind, he builds a situation which in itself is absolute drama. In the last act of "La Rafale" the mistress has sold herself to save her lover. Alone she hates herself, with him she remembers only that she has saved him. He never knows her sacrifice and shoots himself. She has lost him, and her shame was all for nothing. We have no sympathy for the gambling lover and little for the adoring mistress. But the situation to which the whole play has led is planned and worked out with complete mastery of the drama. We don't care for the woman, and her tragedy moves us. We took not much interest in her passion, and the tragedy of her debasement, which was useless, wrings us at the curtain. Since "La Rafale" Henry Bernstein has put his crises in his penultimate acts and wound them up more or less consolingly in the last. One talks from habit of pain and consolation, but the words are really inapplicable: the emotion which Bernstein gives us is purely of the stage and lasts only while the footlights burn; he wrings us, but with dramatic excitement, and does not console, but merely quiets us, at the wind up.

"Le Voleur" is an improved example of the Bernstein manner. We care neither for husband nor for wife nor for

their surroundings. Yet the second act grips and holds us. The woman is confessed a thief : the man is revolted. She lures his heart and his senses, and he forgives. A rebound at the lull brings a second and stronger catastrophe : the boy took her guilt upon himself ; what did she pay for his sacrifice ? The man is jealous : she may plead her innocence more vehemently than she asked pardon for her dishonesty, but now he does not forgive. For both the change of situation has screwed up the pitch of the crisis. She is innocent now and her seduction has gone : she had rather be guilty and still powerful. He loved her, a thief, and hates her, unfaithful : he would prefer a catalogue of sins against others than one against himself. We may pretend in England that this is cynical, it is horribly natural. But even its damning naturalness is only a side issue : the play's the thing. Realism is used, with a fearful directness, only as a means, and unreality would be used without compunction if it served : the end is the sheer dramatic excitement, and it is attained, for no house holds out against the second act, even bowdlerized. Bernstein drama is drama cut down to its elemental force, but the elemental force is prodigious.

“ Samson ” is Bernstein drama strung yet a little higher. We have indeed some sympathy for Jacques Brachard, as we might have for a simple-minded, whole-hearted bull in a china shop, but it is not much, and we have none for anybody else, either the haughty wife or the lover who trades on women. Yet the third act (this time there are two to prepare us) fetches us once more. Samson the strong man of money who loves his wife in vain will pay out his wife's lover. His only weapon is money. He bears the market to ruin the lover ; he bears it so effectually that he will be ruined with the lover. No matter ; let the money which made him all go, if only his foe sink with him : Samson

pulls the temple down to bury his enemy and himself :— and we watched the two men, one holding the other, his muscle conquering here, while his money conquers a quarter of a mile away, and we know the Bourse is dropping and ruining the two, because the one had rather ruin himself than lose the joy of ruining the other. We care little for either character, but this is essentially drama. The last act quiets us more effectively than other Bernstein conclusions : of course the wife is left inevitably to fall in love with the strong man. But Bernstein last acts are a secondary matter : the essential thing is the crisis, and Henry Bernstein is on the French stage, and on any stage, of to-day, the master of dramatic crises. He is the first of all such footlight entertainers.

It is really thus that he belongs to his day ; for the psychology of his day he cares only in so far as it serves him to strengthen his entertainment, unlike Alfred Capus and Octave Mirbeau who find in the picture of to-day the staple of their entertainment. But Henry Bernstein is of the present because, resolved only to entertain, he is a master at it. Between his and Victorien Sardou's purpose there is no difference, but the younger man is the expert, and the veteran was the novice. He has done us one invaluable service : henceforth the play of situation must be on the level of his plays, or the Parisian public will not have it. The famous situation in "*Théodora*"—when *Théodora's* lover, not knowing she is *Théodora*, reviles *Théodora* to her face and discloses his plot against her life, and *Théodora* cannot make herself known to him without losing his love, and cannot save him without imperilling herself or save herself without compassing his death—is a child's toy compared with the craftsmanship of "*Samson*." We may prefer drama of character, but we must not cease thanking Henry Bernstein for the intelligence with which



he has brought the drama of situation up to a standard not before reached.

No other playwright can or would compete with him in his field. Among MM. Hervieu, Brieux, Lavedan, Bataille, Donnay, Lemaître, only the first has made excursions into naked and unashamed drama of situation, not always with success. "*L'Enigme*" was a pretty riddle: to which lady's bedroom did the lover go, while the husbands went a-hunting? "*Le Réveil*" yielded two situations: the lover seized, gagged, bound, and spirited away by his angry and Bulgarian father, who persuades the lady that he has had him murdered; the lover reappearing later and finding the lady, who thought him dead, going out to dinner in ball dress with husband and daughter. But if Paul Hervieu imagined only situations, he would be a mere shadow of a Bernstein. He has drawn characters with a firm hand. In "*Le Réveil*" the two bare situations are of passing interest compared with the clash of feelings in the woman's mind, a mother of forty who has learnt passion late in the day. She is mistress, but mother still; the lover supposed dead, she shakes off the mistress, and dresses for her daughter's first ball. The lover turns up alive, and we understand what the woman feels—caught by him decked out for the evening. What the woman feels is all we care about in the play. "*Le Dédale*" lands a woman in a "maze," but the maze is psychological. It may be more or less true psychology, but it is well studied. I do not know whether the first man a woman loved never loses his hold upon her, but it is an axiom worth positing if you can build a good play on it. The gradual recapture of the woman by her first husband, his merely sensual power over her, her yielding in spite of her self-respect and of her regard for her stick of a second husband, the catastrophe when, in the room next to which her child by her first husband lies saved at last after



a week passed between life and death, she falls into the man's arms again on a sofa and the curtain falls in the nick of time, are real dramatic stuff, and we have once more from Paul Hervieu a play made of a woman's feelings. The end is sheer melodrama and shows how ingenuous a situation-monger he is. He is a dramatist of crises in sentiment, rather dry and stiff, without Alfred Capus' genial touch, but powerful. "*Connais toi*" is another delicately handled crisis in sentiment surrounded by a clumsy plot. Neither the starched General nor his weak wife know themselves. One is all indignant virtue, the other all innocence. The erring little woman whom they find out among their intimates is accordingly trampled upon. The General begins to learn to know himself when the man whom she erred with turns out to be his son. The General's wife is suddenly revealed to herself when a young lieutenant makes love to her and she not only listens to him but unaccountably falls upon his neck. The General knows himself completely when having entered at that precise moment he ends by not only forgiving his wife, but begging her on his knees not to leave him. The husband of the erring little woman was strongly advised against mercy in the beginning of the play. He did not turn up again until the end, when he was surprised at being as strongly urged to forgive and forget. In the interval all the other characters had learnt to know themselves. The plot is so ingenuous that tragic situations hover on the fringe of comedy. The sentimental crisis in the elderly woman, who learns suddenly what temptation is, is drawn with psychological mastery.

Of Eugène Brieux the moralist everybody knows everything; but he takes his place in the gallery of French playwrights of to-day as a realist with one play. Nothing was ever more cruelly and impersonally real than "*Les Hanneçons*." London seems to have thought that such

realism was not worth the doing : have those who think so understood the art in such utter, deadly realism ? A long-suffering professor of natural history and a dear, loving, impossible, maddening girl, are all the play. But the two are drawn as perhaps no characters have been drawn before. Every word they say is what they would say in life ; not one ever calls the hearer back to the footlights, and not one can be imagined which would bring us nearer to life. There is nothing else but the two everyday pitiful persons, nothing but common humanity in the play : those who contemptuously call this mere photographic realism should try their hand at such photography. No one who cannot enjoy supremely the art in "*Les Hanneçons*" has learnt to be a true playgoer. In it Eugène Brieux has caught with genius the fleeting spirit of his and our ordinary human day.

Henri Lavedan snapshotted very light moments of his day, and a few hundred yards of boulevard asphalt, in plays like "*Le Vieux Marcheur*," which gave a new tag to Parisian slang ; he took off boulevardiers' follies in "smart" dialogues, himself a double-dyed boulevardier, and he satirized unimprovingly, moralizing with cheerful immorality. Called to the Academy, he put on a new earnestness. He had already written "*Le Prince d'Aurec*" to prove how the gross growth of finance has blighted the fine flower of aristocracy. He set out to please the Academy still better by describing, with the proper bias, no less a "*Duel*" than that of Science and Religion, after Brunetière. It was a task a little beyond him, and he moved more easily in the trail of the "*vieux marcheur*." Yet "*Le Duel*" deserves to be remembered as a play, not of ideas, but of sentimental psychology. The Duel of Ideas was a humorously unequal affair : the priest scored off his brother the scientific atheist with pleasant ease. Science, discussing ethics,

knew no greater science of argument than to repeat "carpe diem," and, being knocked out every time by a new crushing blow from Religion, got up again and cried "No matter, carpe diem," Religion in the end scorning to score any more and smiling with indulgent superiority. As a matter of fact, Science on the sentimental side has the best of it eventually, as the atheist is left to marry the Duchess, the Duke in the wings having conveniently died of dotage. Before the besotted Duke, heard of not seen, has died, the priest confesses the Duchess and chastens her with suspicious vehemence. He is surprised at the business by the scientific atheist. Science on the sentimental side is keen enough and finds the priest out, who had not found himself out. There is too little of the father in the father-confessor: this is no religious fervour. In the same moment that the man of science jumps to the jealous conclusion, it first dawns on the shamed priest that the conclusion is true: this is real, good, thick drama. Both men live on the stage, the scientific lover rather brutally and ingenuously, but really, the priest more subtly and more intensely, with equal truth. The one scene alone gives "Le Duel" a high rank in modern plays. The wind-up shades off pleasantly into lighter tones, and we retain agreeable memories of the worldly old Bishop who gently throws lukewarm water on the priest's now exaggerated self-reproach and on the over-zealous piety of the Duchess, hinting strongly that she had much better marry the scientific atheist—who may dilute his atheism for her sake—than go into a nunnery which she might weary of.

Quite young, Henri Bataille has been much heard already in many strains. For once the Parisian public made a mistake and cold-shouldered his "Poliche," his best character in his best, and a good, play. He had sought a way before in the sentimental strain. "Maman Colibri"

was the lady of forty who fell in love with the Adonis of twenty, and had to pay for it : she was cured in the last act when she became a grandmother. There was no conscious humour in the play ; but the character of the woman of forty in her Indian summer had delicacy and pathos. One scene is remembered because it epitomized in a dialogue between two women all the tragedy of growing old : one of them is the lady of forty, the other has grown old. “ How does it feel ? ” says the one ; “ Oh, it feels . . . ” shudders the other, and describes. The scene continues on the same artless plan, but carried through with delicate art. “ *La Marche nuptiale* ” was the progress of another woman’s heart, which took unto itself a poor and underbred music master, casting aside family and social ties for him : but the world and breeding told in the long run, the woman loved another man because he was of her clan and her set, and rather than play her poor music-master false, shot herself—and the piece which began in tremendous passion ended rather snobbishly. All this time Henri Bataille was feeling his way—stumbling among women’s hearts. He found his way with “ *Poliche*,” which the Comédie française public, generally acute, misunderstood strangely. The play is a real thing, sincerely felt and courageously carried out. It touches on one truth, the smile amid the tears, and the elements are well mixed in it. By that it deserves to be called a representative play of to-day. It has passed beyond the categories of the school and is neither comedy nor tragedy, but both : it is a play of our to-day, half laughter and half sobs, a human play. A laugh begins it and it ends in a sigh : perhaps even a Parisian audience, though the quickest in the world, is still slow at understanding such a descent, or rise, in four acts, from farce to tragedy, however often it may have met such things off the stage. *Poliche* plays the fool in the first act : he has learnt



that he never pleases women except when he plays the fool. But his heart's desire is no longer to play the fool : if the woman whom he amuses would take him seriously, he would ask no higher fate. She finds him out and discovers Poliche the sentimental lover. She will forget a lady-killer whom she was hankering after and be happy with Poliche. She bores herself with Poliche, no longer funny and going in fear of his life when he does make a joke because he will be thought to be playing the old fool of a Poliche again. She bores herself so clearly that he lets her go, sees her off at the country railway station whence she takes the train to meet the lady-killer whom she cannot forget after all, and remains behind, a poor, simple Poliche, without the ghost of a joke left in him—for he can't even play the fool to her now—with tears running down his fat cheeks, and begging pardon because he jostled a passenger in a hurry to catch the express. We must love Poliche and we cannot forgive the Paris public for not having loved him : he really lives and the world lives round him. There is a something which gives the play humanity, and part of it is what one calls atmosphere, beyond and around the human character of Poliche. What in the play is the deftly caught spirit of to-day is the natural blending of comedy and tragedy. No other playwright of the day has dared thus to begin in laughter and end in tears.

With “*La femme nue*,” Henri Bataille began stumbling among woman's hearts again, and the tragedy—for the women—of a man's marrying his mistress and meeting afterwards the woman who should have been his wife, is partly drowned in gush. A woman's heart again, but this time in a situation intended to be *à la* Bernstein, is “*Le Scandale*.” The pure woman's one lapse is drawn with tender knowledge : her fault remains outside her character, and the good wife and mother was not tarnished when the



primitive woman in her fell grossly. Her struggles afterwards in a blackmailer's toils are drama of situation which Henry Bernstein would have pieced together with neater theatrical craftsmanship, but his heroine would not have been as human.

Did M. Henri Bataille find with "Poliche" that humour does not pay? He has not had any since. "*La Vierge folle*," his greatest popular success, is furious sentimentality taking itself in deadly earnest. Nothing but love exists, not the love made up of many contradictory, great and small, simple and subtle things, not the love of ordinary and real men and women, but love the storm, love the catastrophe, love that lasts for three or four acts, then kills off the lover or the mistress because they could not go on longer loving so, love that demands the poetry of "*Tristan and Isolde*"—and perhaps the music also—before it can wholly convince any but ingenuously romantic minds. Some French critics hailed the play as the prose "*Tristan and Isolde*" of to-day. If such a "*Tristan*" could ever be written, M. Bataille has not written it. The deadly earnest passion of the successful counsel and old married man of forty-two for the Duke's daughter of eighteen whom he seduced, and hers for him, takes itself more seriously than we can take it: that is the most serious fault in the play. Granted the passion, the play follows logically and vigorously enough, but it has to be granted, and we have some difficulty in granting it. If the busy barrister, clear and cool-headed (or he would not have got to the top of his profession) really was open to such a love storm as swept him off his feet, well and good; if the daughter of the Duke and of his delightful Duchess really did find such irresistible fascination in the prosperous lawyer that she could not help giving herself body and soul to him, we agree that just before the last curtain she plausibly shot herself, having

reached the highest happiness, after which everything else must be a come down, of hearing from his own lips before his wife that he loves his mistress better than he ever loved his wife. The spectator of ingenuously romantic temperament can take such floods of passion for granted ; other minds cannot help asking for psychological particulars. The passion reached its paroxysm before the play began and remains at its paroxysm throughout the play. It is a passion without a history and without evolution, an entity of passion, which you must accept without questioning. The characters of the barrister and his mistress are mere abstract passion, unaccounted for and unanalyzed. The wife's character is as elementary, but here the same passion is hungry, not satisfied. We are in a world not of men and women who live their diverse lives, but of unconscious creatures possessed by the sex instinct. The clash of the three passions can, and does, make strong drama of its kind, but it would be stronger if it were less strenuous. Vehement passion, sprung upon us without warning and raging without repose, convinces us less than if it sometimes stopped to rest, think, and look at itself. It is difficult for us to take the love affair of the barrister and the Duke's daughter quite as seriously as they take it themselves, who are casting everybody and everything else to the winds for its sake ; even the betrayed wife's passion we can hardly take as tragically as she takes it, who has not an ounce of dignity to weigh in the balance with it and runs after the runaway couple, to ask him whether at least he will come back to his wife when he is old and tired of his mistress. The sentimental mind calls this the sublime grovelling of passion. The ordinary mind is not completely satisfied either by the woman's frenzy or by her self-abasement. The characters neither explain themselves nor are explained by their setting, they are explained neither from the inside

nor from the outside. While the psychology of passion is sketchy, atmosphere is absent. The characters come into the play from nowhere and we do not for a moment imagine that any of them go on living after the play is over. The author has not tried in a single line to "place" them in the world. The Duke is rather dismal, the feather-headed Duchess is charming, the priest and confidant is plausible; the two heroines and the hero are all three mere homogeneous passion. None of them move in a setting which we can feel to be a corner of the real world, either of this or another day. There is no landscape—only three volcanoes of passion. There are none of those subtle tendrils thrown out (as from some of Alfred Capus' plays) which connect the world of the play, though it be but a play, with the world in which we are who are seeing the play. M. Bataille has not dreamt what atmosphere is. For that reason I think the opinion of some French critics that "*La Vierge folle*" proved him the master of the French stage of to-day will be in time much revised. The "*Vierge folle*" has rather estranged him from the real modern drama.

Jules Lemaître has been perhaps an acuter critic than playwright, certainly an acuter playwright than politician. All rejoiced when he came back from the arena to the stage with "*La Massière*," the play of his by which, so far, he ranks. Earlier productions like "*Le Député Leveau*" are forgotten, in spite of their good writing and a style full of life. His later play "*Bertrade*" suffered from a blight of strangely thicklaid snobbishness: perhaps the politician was coming out again. One act of his, besides "*La Massière*," remains, or ought to remain—"La bonne Hélène," a broad and keen farce worthy of Aristophanes. Helen was fair; is it unlikely that she was as kind as she was fair? She is kind all round, has not the heart to be cruel to anyone, and she even foresees that she will not be adamant to

Astyanax when he grows up. Helen's real character being understood, there is no reason why Greeks and Trojans should not make friends again.

"La Massière" is Jules Lemaître's really human play. It studies with fine gradations to a tragic outburst a crisis in character: an old man's love. The successful painter, who has "arrived" at last, falls in love with his pupil, the "massière" of his class, without knowing it. His wife, who shared his early struggles and for whom he is the only man in the world, sees the infatuation, and we see it, coming on; the girl herself grows fearful. Only the old man is blind to himself: his self-deception is drawn with the skill and knowledge of a master psychologist. The son loves the girl, and the crisis comes when the truth breaks upon the old man and he is jealous of his son. It is a tragic crisis, which has slowly ripened since the play began and which now produces its highest possible effect. It is no mere situation, elaborately put and primed to go off at the right moment like a set piece of fireworks, it is an explosion of character which was inevitable, because the character is human and its development natural. If the Gods of the stage had been good, they would have given to Henry Bernstein the same mastery in psychology, or to Jules Lemaître Henry Bernstein's marvellous dramatic instinct.

Maurice Donnay, a better boulevard-amuser than even Henri Lavedan, has like him put his serious self forward in one play—for the Comédie française, of course. He entertains perhaps more naturally than he moves, and his earlier "Amants," "Lysistrata," and other plays were more amusing than "L'Autre danger" is serious. Yet he found for the latter a good situation *à la* Bernstein, and treated it well, though not in the best Bernstein fighting style. The "happiest of the three" has avoided the husband peril, but has never thought of the "other danger," and finds

before he knows it that he has fallen in love with the daughter and she with him. He flies, the girl overhears the truth and is pining away, the mother swears tales told are black libels, and the mother's lover will marry the daughter. It is a pretty situation, though quite independent of character ; Maurice Donnay decorates it, as his other plays, with arabesques of light language.

Maurice Donnay is one of those who lead a smart host of entertainers. French farce also has its place in to-day and never has held a higher. The fun of to-day on the Paris stage is the funniest and the most intelligent which any stage has known for several generations. There is no more absurd superstition than that of the sadness of to-day, and no less meaning regret in Paris than that for the good old farce. If our to-day is no less amusing, as it is no less serious, than any other day, the present French stage is as adequate to its day as the drama has ever been to any day.

### III—PLAYERS

LET us say only one more thing of Sarah Bernhardt : we saw her re-"create" Victor Hugo's "Angelo, tyrant of Padua." It was a wonderful evening. Homodei, the Jesuit spy of Venice, slumbered on a bench with one eye and both ears open. The tyrant of Padua, meekest of men, told us how his palace was alive with informers and honeycombed with treachery : stealthy steps were faintly heard behind the wainscots, no one knew how many secret doors any room hid, walls had ears and tapestries eyes. Lovable Victor Hugo, we loved him more than ever for thinking that he was revealing Shakespearean drama to France. La



Tisbe appeared and we gradually forgot Victor Hugo. By degrees, word by word, intonation by intonation, she put something new into the play. We never completely understood how she did it, she did it so easily and without show. Homodei became almost serious and we believed in Angelo's honeycombed palace. Sarah Bernhardt put something into the play which Victor Hugo had forgotten to put in, something that was like real poetry. La Tisbe was the courtesan of original purity, and one believed in her; by some complication (which we have forgotten, but she made it all clear to us at the time) she was at once the enemy and friend of Angelo and planned at once the death and safety of a lady whose name, we think, was Catarina; she sat at a table, saw a crucifix on the wall, cried "*La croix de ma mère!*" and knew she must save Catarina—and we believed in her. We had supernatural faith in La Tisbe all through. It is impossible to tell how Sarah did it. Imagine any other actress recognizing "the cross of her mother"—Victor Hugo's Shakespearean touch. But Sarah recognized it and compelled us to believe in her. This is not the art of acting, nor nature, nor "living a part"; it is making gold out of dross, poetry out of fustian.

Sarah being divine, shall we among the mortals put M. Guitry first? He will agree to that himself, and not many spectators will disagree. He seems to have ceased to act at all in these last few years. One looks back with amazement to the days when he was Macbeth with some raw force at the Odéon and the witches were ballet-girls, or a sort of Buddha (invented with a fine effort at "*la littérature*" by the late Armand Silvestre in a respite snatched from tame Rabelaisianism) to Sarah Bernhardt's "*Izeyl*"—we have forgotten what *Izeyl* was, but she loved Guitry. The actor to us now is the modern everyday man of Capus, Jules Lemaître and Henry Bernstein. We think of him no longer

as an actor ; but the Capusian optimist of " *La Veine* " and " *La Châtelaine*," means to the memory Guitry, the old painter in love with " *la Massière* " is Guitry, " *Samson* " is Guitry. Thick-set, heavy, clumsy, bull-necked, he seemed cut out for the optimist who blunders cheerfully through obstacles and comes out delighted. He was made to console and set up and stick to flower-ladies with his faith in " *la Veine*," or to reassure agonized châtelaines. But afterwards he seemed equally well-made to be the old man in love up to the ears and jealous like a lover of his son : we remember a Guitry—in his shirt-sleeves washing his hands, and as he waved the towel, trying to explain to his meek but canny old wife that it was all nonsense about him and the girl and that he was a father to her—who was a wonder deserving to be remembered. Guitry finding out his wife in the second act of " *Le Voleur*," Guitry made love to by all the " *Passagères* " one after the other, Guitry—Samson, the strong man smashing his wife's lover, Guitry the old man in the claws of a woman—" *la Griffé* "—preyed upon slowly and sinking hideously scene by scene, into moral dotage and final insanity, even Guitry the Duke, whose neckties are a pattern in " *Bertrade* "—it seems to be Guitry all the time. But there is no harm in that. The modern actor must play *his* part ; he must give up trying to change—to quick-change—himself. The acting of to-day is no longer deliberate and reflective impersonation : the actor must be himself in his part. Why should there be shame in writing a play for an actor ? It is the only means to a perfect entertainment of the stage. There may never have been an actor who lived Hamlet, but is not reading " *Hamlet* " perhaps the best entertainment after all ? And Shakespeare, who was the best of entertainers and wrote for the stage, evidently overreached himself and wrote also beyond the stage, in spite of himself. The play-

wright of to-day does not write beyond the stage ; otherwise, why should he write plays, having other fields ? If he wants to give us the best footlight entertainment he can, let him write plays for an actor—if he can find a Guitry. No actor was ever so wholly, so absurdly natural on the stage.

M. de Féraudy runs him close, and he also plays his own parts. The acting of to-day, as the art is improved, becomes less and less actual counterfeit. There would be doubts whether the actor feels more now than he used, even were the old question decided, whether he ought to feel—and only a critic in the skin of an actor, hence a monstrosity, will ever decide it. But the actor of to-day acts more and more his own self. He is given feelings to express which are natural to him, and the expression of which comes naturally to his physique, his features, his attitudes, his voice. Wide versatility is no longer what we require from him, and we shall not thank him for attempting absurd impossibilities. We do not want fat ladies who force their temperament to look thin, and spare and shrivelled men who swell themselves to Macbeth or roar piping voices into Othello's, lovers whom the ladies couldn't love, and tragedians naturally comic : the actor's own ambition of course is to act the part for which he was precisely denied the means by nature. To obtain our best entertainment we must give him only the parts for which he was cut out. Perfection will be attained when he acts himself. Let him be rid of the idea that he has to feign perpetually ; within bounds, let him on the contrary be convinced that he must always be himself. At least cure him of the habit of thinking " Now I am the Emperor of Rome," " Now I am the lover," " Now the jealous husband," " Now the villain," and cure him of looking at himself in the parts. The best actor is the actor who is

most himself, but it is clear that he must be helped by the dramatist. In future our actors and actresses will be confined more and more each to a small range of characters and the entertainment of the stage will improve. The individual actor's importance will dwindle as a rule, but that we cannot help; in some cases we may be giving the actor almost the rank of a creative genius, if being himself he be the greatest characters of the drama. The lady who insists on being the heroine, whether schoolgirl or divorcée, a bundle of passion or a haughty stone, will disappear, and with her the boy-lover of seventy, the comfortable Don Juan, the tragedy King middle-class husband, and dozens of others. The player will no longer be an universal genius, but the right man to be fitted by the playwright into the right place. When the right place is the greatest, the actor will be correspondingly great. We may admire the man in the wrong place who does his best cleverly, but it is absurd to put him there, and his best in it cannot be the best. The kind of playing talent that adapts itself with equal ingenuity to the swashbuckler's part and the faint-hearted lover's achieves only a makeshift, and even the great skill that compels our admiration in the most different and incongruous characters must be squandered shamefully in some of them. It must indeed in the end be wasted all round. After some years of such versatility the greatest actors will lose the power to be themselves; we end by wondering at them as at Fregolis, but would give all their quick changes to see them act their own parts. All their different "tours de force" are not worth one character in which they would be themselves and therefore the best they can be.

Guitry and de Féraudy are good actors, not because they play many characters well, but because they live a few. They have acted, not many various parts, but themselves



with variations. Isidore Lechat, Lucien Briant in "Notre Jeunesse," Poliche were so many de Féraudys, varied, but the same. The bluff cynicism, ingenuous vanity, obtuse smartness, of the man of "Business is business" were of a piece with the weakness of the man fearful of the consequences of his youth, and with the soft simplicity of the sentimental lover who plays the clown. It is not a bull to say that three characters played by the same man are akin, nor absurd to praise an actor for being himself in three different parts. The actor may not thank us for saying so, but he should, if he be intelligent. M. de Féraudy cannot help being himself because he has a personality, and he is a good actor for that reason. The bad actor never is himself on the stage. The good actor will be bad in a part in which he cannot use what personality he has and must do his best to keep it down. The best actor is not the most adaptable man, but the man with a personality which insists on asserting itself. In the greatest works written for—and beyond—the stage, the actor's personality may be a nuisance, unless it fit in—but can it ever?—with the creations of genius, but will the actor without personality be less annoying? Hence, the greatest works do not as a whole give us the most complete stage entertainment, or rarely. Shakespeare is the greatest entertainer still, but the entertainment is never complete; it is good to see on the stage, but it might always be better. It is real stuff for the stage, but it never satisfies, because it is never completely realized, if it ever could be. Must there not be always something wanting in a stage King Lear? The play is a real play, but its poetry goes beyond the powers of the stage. In a stage Poliche or Samson or Isidore Lechat there is nothing wanting. There is no annoying poetry, for one thing, and no hampering creation of genius to hinder us and the actor. We are satisfied with our modest little, but we are satisfied.



When an actor tries to be King Lear, we must be resigned to his mere feigning : he will most commonly then not be himself. When Guitry is "Samson" or de Féraudy is "Poliche," they are themselves, with variations, and the entertainment in itself is whole and perfect.

Mounet-Sully is himself and a great actor as King Œdipus. No moment on any stage of to-day is more tragic than that of Mounet-Sully's rushing out of his palace, blinded by himself. The roar of his voice, crying his guilt and the pain with which he has punished himself, his torn face, his arms outstretched, and the onrush of his body as he goes out to wander, are living horrors. He alone to-day makes us understand what a sublime entertainer Sophocles was. The one part, even were some others, such as Creon in *Antigone*, left out of account, is enough to make the actor great ; he has failed with characteristic thoroughness in some other parts. One can say little of his *Hernani*, because one always wonders whether the "lion superbe et généreux" can be called a character at all ; why not after all roar the part as he does ? What would become of it, acted humanly ? But Mounet-Sully's *Hamlet* remains a warning to all actors. The "doyen" of the *Comédie française* is persuaded of course that he can act anything ; he may not even understand that he has a personality. No doubt his acting is instinct, he lets himself go, and is a King Œdipus who has no equal. He can have little knowledge and intelligence of himself, having played *Hamlet*. After years, the suffering of spectators remains acute in their memory ; one mourned not only *Hamlet* murdered, tortured beyond recognition, turned into a sort of *Hernani* with a dash of *Mephistopheles*, but Mounet-Sully wasted. The greatest actors have to be cured of the belief that acting is only making believe, and that they are great enough to feign anything on the stage. M. de Max, who

ought to succeed Mounet-Sully, has fortunately never tried Hamlet, that I know of. He has always remained himself, and always picturesque, with his enormous voice, his rolling eye, and his command of coaxing insidiousness as well as flaying fury. He is delicious as either a satisfying villain, a wily prelate, a gently ferocious Grand Inquisitor, a snake-like spy, or even a slyly wheedling sort of Mark Antony.

M. Le Bargy's ties have been injudiciously advertised beyond their deserts. In spite of them he has often been successfully himself—the lady-killer. He was the only possible Max de Pogis in “*Le Dédale*.” He delighted in snaring dishonourably his former wife married to another. He felt no compunction when he saw her flesh weaken in spite of her will and took her without a qualm for his prey. He talked of fatherhood, but he really was all flesh himself, and only his senses spoke. He was not hateful, as another actor might have been, because the man (as we saw him on the stage) could not help himself. He had lady-killing in the blood and it was no fault of his. He was born to prey on women ; he had driven his wife to divorce ; having lost her he must recapture her, if she were his wife still he would sicken of her. The man may be morally contemptible, but the man is a real man on the stage : it is all Le Bargy cares about and all we ought to care about. Le Bargy was again himself, with interesting variations, in “*Le Duel*.” The lady-killer as priest : one can imagine the character tempting him. The Duchess is not in love with the priest, but she easily might be, and one feels that the heart beneath the cassock and tenderness in holiness are perversely dangerous. What Le Bargy did amazingly was to show the priest's innocence in his danger. He found out all at once with complete sincerity where the land lay, which we knew all along, and

what we knew him to have been feeling. When he repented, there was sweetness in his sackcloth and ashes : he had sinned in thought, but it was no trivial sin, it was a sin worth sinning, a sin with an undoubted charm about it. It is subtle acting that draws these nice characters finely yet clearly.

Some more actors' moments are remembered : Tarride, the boulevard bluffer in "*L'Esbroufe*," who drew a complete and final picture of spurious activity and sham vitality ; Lérand, the abject young millionaire in the same play, a Marneffe in a dramatized "*Cousine Bette*" who still makes us shudder when we think of him, and the young modern French Jew in a rather absurd "anti-Semitic" play "*Décadence*," a Jew whose father "arrived" and who "has always worn clean linen," hard, strong, cultured, yet pathetic in the world which he conquers but which slavishly hates him ; Dumény in a fine bit of "business" at the end of "*La Rafale*," when he has to be cheerful and loving to the lady and at the same time to settle everything for blowing his brains out when he has got rid of her ; Huguenet explaining deliciously in "*Le Tour de main*" how he has always made women happy all his life by lying to them ; Grand who will succeed Le Bargy as the *Comédie française* lady-killer and already is the most natural and plausible ladies' darling we know on any stage.

These are all moments of acting in which the actors are absolutely themselves. The expression that serves generally is that they "lived their parts," but it is truer that they lived their own selves and that the parts fitted them. What can be said of a greater "star's" moments, of the elder Coquelin's million moments ? He was of another school : the school is not the best, but he led it ; one should rather say, he was great in his way, but his way was not the best. We all remember his wonderful voice and enunciation

which made the rest of the cast seem to mumble, his go, and his "panache." But he was too often thinking of his acting and letting us see it, preparing his effects, showing the works. A speech that tells—but we caught it in the act of "telling"; a splendid bit of character-painting—but we saw it being painted, watched the colours being laid on. Perhaps Coquelin was absolutely himself only as Cyrano de Bergerac: he *was* Cyrano, and there is no more to say, except that there will probably never be another.

If Sarah be divine, Réjane is human. Everyone remembers her in dozens of parts, remembers her coy, petulant, naughty, caressing, humorous. But she has also been tragically great: her Germinie Lacerteux was one of the few real tragedies of to-day on the stage, perhaps the only one. The pitiful "bonne," her face already drawn with the weariness of coming motherhood, serving lovingly her mistress (who must not know) and the party of children at dinner, the woman afterwards standing up to the savage and conquering Jupillon, but yielding after all and giving the bully the last francs which she had saved for the unborn baby: it is squalid but real tragedy. None who once saw Réjane's Germinie Lacerteux can ever forget it. This is great acting; Réjane and Germinie Lacerteux are identified: she was herself in the part.

Julia Bartet, "doyenne" of the Comédie française, is herself in graceful attitudes, melodious speech, the great lady's simple manner; she is not really herself in anything else. She acts with perfect art, but she always acts. Her Antigone is pathetic in gesture and moving by the music of the voice, but not an Antigone to strike deep blows at our feelings. In "Le Dédale," one of her famous parts, Mme Bartet *plays* the agonies of the ex-Mme de Pogis admirably, but always plays them. A small detail which means something was told me by an actor whom I will not give away.



At the very knot of passion in "The Maze," Mme Bartet carefully curls her little finger, as she hangs her hand with studied carelessness over the back of the sofa; it is an elegant attitude, but she should not then think of it. The curled little finger almost paralysed the actor whom I will not mention; he did his best to feel his part, but the carefully curled little finger of the hand he was to kiss fascinated him. If she was thinking then how most effectively to spread her well-manicured hand, how could she be swept away by her senses? He, while his eye was on the carefully curled little finger, could not possibly sweep her off with his senses. Yet it had to be done—and done quickly, in a gale of passion, or the scene was wrecked—and the curtain was nearly due. So much unwritten tragedy can there be in a little finger.

Jeanne Granier is always Jeanne Granier and we thank her for it; she is, indeed, still Jeanne Granier, and we are even more thankful for that—still the playful, perverse, sometimes tender Jeanne Granier. She has never tried to be anything but herself on the stage. Mme Simone reduces our theory that the player must play himself almost to the elemental absurd: she has acted hitherto always one character with trifling variations, a creature more of nerves than of feeling, sensitive but not tender, a woman all trembling on wires, not with a quivering heart. She loves beyond a woman's shame in "La Rafale," beyond common honesty in "Le Voleur," but in both she loves with the brain and the nerves, and presumably the senses, but not with the heart: the author might have asked her to love with her heart, but she does not, she cannot help it. And why should she? She makes the character live because she is herself when she plays it. In "Samson" there is no one whom she can love truly, but after the play she ought to begin to love her husband the strong man; yet she will



love him only because he is strong—love him only with her mastered nerves. Why should she not be herself? She always is identically the same Simone, but she is a living thing on the stage, with all her mannerisms, her long waving arms, her expressive upper lip, her jerky movements and twitching hands: she lives on the stage, and we cannot ask for more.

We recall other women who, less extremely perhaps, are themselves on the stage, and that is why we remember them; some have had moments, some have a career. Mme Blanche Pierson at the Comédie française has been since her hair grew white the perfect dowager, pathetically bourgeoise in "*Les Affaires sont les affaires*," stiffly prejudiced for all her humanity in "*Le Dédale*," unscrupulously human in "*Notre jeunesse*," delightfully "*grande dame*" in "*L'Amour vieille*." Mme Marie Magnier of miraculous vitality is the humorous dowager, with a gorgeous expanse of humour and rich fun, violent but never common. Mlle Marie Leconte and Mlle Marthe Règnier were born to charm: let them charm, and they play their right part. Other actresses have had their moments, and will repeat them: Mlle Berthe Bady loves and must love to the death, with scarlet passion, black despair, wringing of hands, convulsive claspings, which come to her naturally, and all M. Henri Bataille's distressed heroines are Mlle Bady under different names; Mme Louise Silvain has been a real Electra, all dark vengeance; Mme Jane Hading must be mournfully in love and decoratively passionate; Mme Anna Judic (since her singing days are over) has to be the sweet old lady, in whom charm has aged but is still the same charm; Mlles Cécile Sorel and Berthe Cerny are the two "*grandes coquettes*" of the Comédie française (which keeps up still the excellent tradition of the "*emploi*," the character which "*belongs*" to each leading member of the

company) and they both gave us their best moment when pitted against one another in "Poliche"; Mlle Piérat, the improved type of "jeune fille," an "ingénue," but with little nonsense about her, not the absurd "white goose" played by Mlle Reichenberg until middle-age, Mlle Eve Lavallière, the "gamin de Paris" in petticoats, Mme Brandès, impassioned and haughty, Mlle Darcourt, impertinent and soft, Mme Segond-Weber, the real tragedy queen, all have their personalities. We know that all these ladies would like precisely to be admired for what they are not—Mlle Lavallière for depth of passion, perhaps, and Mme Segond-Weber for the light manner—but it is the author's and stage director's business to see that they keep to their natures and act themselves.

Of all-round stage-managers, André Antoine (at the Odéon) and Firmin Gémier (at the Théâtre Antoine) are probably at present the best in the world. Their companies pay the penalty, for few of their players stand out and all fit in to the whole performance. I imagine that both managers tell their actors and actresses to be themselves, with variations no doubt, in their parts. Playing together, playing to each other and not to the footlights, playing for the play and not for themselves—all that has been drilled into them as a matter of course. But one imagines that the last and loudest cry of both managers is "In the name of the stage, be natural, be yourselves. If you feel this passage that way, say it that way, and by the gods don't try to say it another way. If that be your reading of your part, read it thus, and by the *Deus ex machinâ*, don't read it as you think another would read it or as you think it ought to be read. You may be bad in your part being yourself, but you can't anyhow then be as bad in it as you would be, not being yourself."

We must not forget to thank those who being themselves

make us, or have made us, laugh : Torin, the fat boy, who died suddenly a few hours after the last laugh he drew from us ; Albert Brasseur, always the same Brasseur, whatever his part, whom more than the play we go to see, with the same absurdities, the same mouth like a small " o," and the cat's mustachios ; jolly Guy ; jollier Boisselot (henpecked and rebellious Guitry's henpecked but resigned neighbour in " Les Hanneçons," who, when Guitry was furiously trying to throw his lady out of doors, sighed, " No, cher Monsieur, do not try. They *never* go. *I* know it," and answered cheerfully, " Yes, dear," to a shrewish voice screaming to him from the flat above), who seemed too jolly to die yet has died ; Germain whose amazements and perplexities are commonly funnier than the plays he plays in ; podgy Mlle Cassive, all blond, smiling fun ; and a dozen others who are all useful, for they all amuse us, being true to themselves, to their own naturally amusing selves. We might, if we pursued, be led on almost to lay down that the actor when he is himself makes the play.

THE END

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